



METROPARKS OF THE TOLEDO AREA

TODAY



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TOLEDO AREA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1	CHAPTER 6 – ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT	43
INTRODUCTION	1	ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	43
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	4	CHAPTER 7 – IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.....	45
CONCLUSION	8	LAND MANAGEMENT AND ACQUISITION	45
CHAPTER 2 – COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT	9	FACILITIES	46
KEY LEADERSHIP AND STAKEHOLDER SUMMARY	9	PROGRAMMING	47
DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS	12	PARTNERSHIPS	48
CHAPTER 3 – PROGRAMMING AND PARTNERSHIP ANALYSIS ..	13	PARK MAINTENANCE.....	48
INTRODUCTION	13	FINANCE.....	49
OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS	13	ADMINISTRATIVE AND MARKETING OPERATIONS	50
PRIORITIES AND CORE PROGRAMS	14	CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION	51
LIFECYCLE ANALYSIS	21	Appendix A – Demographic Information	53
PROGRAM FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT	22	Appendix B – Core Competency	61
PROGRAM STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT .	24		
VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERSHIPS	25		
MARKETING AND PROMOTION	26		
CHAPTER 4 – PARK CLASSIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS.....	27		
PARK DESIGN PRINCIPLES	27		
CHAPTER 5 – FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	29		
DATA COLLECTION.....	29		
FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT	30		
FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS	32		
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES.....	34		
FUNDING AND REVENUE STRATEGIES.....	35		

CHAPTER 1 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

For the last decade, the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area (Metroparks) operated within a three-year strategic planning cycle framed in the context of the agency's connection to the land, community, staff, and to the future. This approach to strategic planning was embedded within a comprehensive plan based on a series of policies adopted by the Metroparks Board of Park Commissioners. These policies required all operations of the park system to meet or exceed established standards, ensuring exceptional stewardship of natural resources, and fiscal responsibilities. They also addressed the agency's commitment to public satisfaction, public and staff safety, internal and external service, and communication.

The strategic plan for the period of 2007-2010 had no provisions for the impacts associated with the financial crisis of 2007-2008 and the subsequent recession.

The agency was primarily funded through two independent tax levies: a 1.4 millage General Operation Levy with a term of collection from 2007 through 2017 and a .3 millage Land Acquisition Levy running from 2002 through 2012. This revenue stream was also supplemented with local government funds, which were reduced during the recession. Other economic impacts also included a severe reduction of tax-based revenue associated with devaluation of residential and commercial property, delinquent payments, and property foreclosures.

This loss of revenue presented significant challenges to the day-to-day operations and all levels of future planning of the park system. As a result, the primary objectives of the strategic planning cycle of 2010-2013 were to reduce overhead, while maintaining essential basic core services, yet continue with planned repair and replacement of critical park infrastructure. Staffing and program levels were reduced and the developments of several park projects were put on hold.

During the 2010-2013 strategic planning cycle, senior staff and the board of park commissioners began to consider operational changes to maintain the agency's commitment to the land, community, staff, and future. It was apparent through analysis of ten-year financial projections that revenue would need to increase, along with the requirement of additional budget reductions or both.

Two independently conducted public surveys in 2012 clearly illustrated one belief and two desires expressed by the residents: the community's value of the Metroparks system, the aversion to entry fees, and the willingness to support the park system with additional taxes. A series of public presentations and meetings were conducted with community organizations, existing park partners, potential new partners, individuals, and business associations. The purpose of the meetings was to share reasons why there was a need for the new tax levy, to discuss opportunities it would present, and to solicit input and observations about the park system not discovered from the survey data.

The decision to ask the voters to support a new levy was predicated on the fact that revenue losses had resulted in an erosion of fundamental core park services and the development of several major new parks had been indefinitely suspended. After careful consideration, the board of park commissioners decided to allow the .3 millage Land Acquisition Levy to expire and move forward with a proposed new .9 millage levy.



Wiregrass Lake

In November 2012, the citizens of Lucas County saw fit to pass a .9 millage Park District Levy for the purpose of general operations, land acquisition, land development, and capital improvements. With the passage of this levy, the park system was presented with an opportunity to chart a new course for the next two decades, including restoring lost services, continued reinvestment in capital improvements, the initiation of major maintenance activities in the existing parks, completing the development of two new parks, resuming planning and subsequent development for several new park projects that had been stopped, planning for park development on recent acquisitions, and to continue essential land acquisition for future open space and greenways.

The park administration and the board of park commissioners were also committed to work toward the creation of an operational plan that would preclude the need to ask voters for increased tax millage for the next two decades, barring any unforeseen problems when planning forward.

In 2013, Metroparks of the Toledo Area launched a comprehensive planning process, the purpose of which was to establish a long term 20-year vision for the park system, inventorying existing conditions, identifying opportunities for connecting natural area and open spaces, and connecting parks and parkways to communities. This comprehensive planning would also create a collection of conceptual plans to guide the completion of new park developments over the next ten years and create a corresponding business and sustainability plan to ensure the balance and stability of Metroparks over the next decade and beyond.

To fully maximize the potential of this multi-tiered planning approach, three consulting firms were selected based on their specific areas of expertise: URS, MKSK, and PROS Consulting.

URS was challenged to create a 20-year future plan. This future plan would identify and inventory opportunities to connect existing parks and open spaces to communities and population centers, and to recommend preservation strategies for significant natural areas. MKSK was retained to review preliminary plans for existing undeveloped parks and to create conceptual plans for the new park development in selected study areas. PROS



Consulting was contracted to review existing park operations and to offer recommendations to enhance services, to provide guidelines for controlled growth, and to create standards to ensure a sustainable future for Metroparks.

Each consulting firm approached their portion of the project with the instruction to create a document that could stand alone as an independent plan. The three aforementioned firms worked together to coordinate their data collection and information evaluation.

Metroparks has a long legacy and has received and continues to enjoy tremendous public support and use. Therefore, this study was built on several basic principles that have been the operational foundation for Metroparks, synonymous with the success of the organization to date. As part of this planning process, a new mission statement was created reflecting these values. The mission statement was carefully crafted to mirror the language of state legislation, enabling the creation of Ohio Park Districts. Legislation adopted in 1917 allowed for the creation of Metroparks of the Toledo Area.

The mission of Metroparks of the Toledo Area:

“The mission of Metroparks of the Toledo Area is to conserve the region’s natural resources by creating, developing, improving, protecting, and promoting clean, safe, and natural parks and open spaces for the benefit, enjoyment, education, and general welfare of the public.”

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

LAND MANAGEMENT

Our vision for land is to appropriately develop existing underutilized regional parks to serve the district and connect regional parks with an integrated trail system for the purpose of linking open spaces, promoting health and wellness and regional connectivity.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Complete a network of trails in Lucas County. The trails would ideally link with regional, national, and international trails systems, including the North Coast Inland Trail, and the North Country National Scenic Trail.
- Develop water trails or blue trails along the Toledo and Lucas County tributaries to serve a growing demand for recreation canoeing and kayaking.
- Connect existing parks to the water along Ottawa and Maumee Rivers, Tenmile Creek, Swan Creek, and the Lake Erie Shoreline.
- Develop launch points with adequate parking to accommodate non-motorized recreational watercraft.
- Link parks to parks and create loop trails.
- Develop view sheds along the river and streams for users to enjoy the river and wildlife.
- Continue to develop partnerships in land management for Oak Openings with the Maumee State Forest, Toledo Airport Authority, local communities, and the Nature Conservancy.



- Develop The Middlegrounds in 2014-2015, Howard Farms by 2018, Fallen Timbers Battlefield by 2015, Chessie Trail by 2015, Belt Property by 2016, Keil Farms by 2017, Blue Creek Conservation Area by 2018, portions of Oak Openings by 2015, Manhattan Marsh by 2018, regional trail connections by 2018.
- Develop a Natural Resource Management Plan across the system with a communication plan and staffing requirements to support it.
- Consider developing an Eco-tourism Plan with the Convention and Visitor Bureau to enhance existing eco-tourism opportunities.
- Acquire future park land based on set criteria approved by the board of commissioners with an established goal.
- Incorporate a video production of the work done by the Natural Resources Division to educate the community and district staff on the value of their work.

FACILITIES

Our vision for park facilities and amenities is to provide a wide-range of park related experiences for users of all ages to create lifetime users without over extending the system financially.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Incorporate design principles into the development of the parks with measurable outcomes, including ecological services and health and fitness components. Programs and program experiences need to drive design.
- Design for at least four experiences for each of the 17 age segments that make up a person's life in each of the new park designs. Use these principles when updating existing parks to create stronger experiences and create destination parks. This will help spread visitors from Wildwood to other parks.
- Incorporate partners in the design process for parks.
- Develop a true cost of service assessment for the operations and maintenance of the updated parks or new parks so proper operational funding for staff and equipment will occur. This needs to be done in the form of a mini-business plan.
- Incorporate adequate program space in the parks and buildings to create a good experience for users and staff.



Caretaker's Cottage Living Room

- Create a virtual view of the park district's facilities before people rent them and post them on the website.
- Consider adding new amenities, such as single track trails, horse trails, and outdoor adventure amenities to draw young adults to the parks.
- Consider the development of a park ranger headquarter space.
- Consider expanding the purchasing limits for the Executive Director to move projects along at a faster pace.
- Incorporate minority business inclusion process working with the African American Chamber of Commerce.
- Maintain an asset management plan to identify and track the lifecycle of park amenities.
- Continue exploring improved utility alternatives to reduce the cost and increase the efficiency of utilities.
- Improve integrated planning process involving maintenance and program staff in the design process to ensure that they have input into how the facilities will be as productive and efficient as possible.
- Develop technology into design of parks and facilities to include Wi-Fi and GIS access points.

PROGRAMMING

Our vision is to broaden program services to appeal to a wider age segment and offer opportunities for new experiences to increase the value of Metroparks to the community.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Incorporate consistent program principles into all programs developed by Metroparks' staff.
- Categorize all programs as core essential, important, and value added.
- Consider broadening program offerings to include outdoor recreation skills, senior recreation, wellness, special population recreation, adventure activities, and urban youth enrichment programs.
- Track national and regional trends for programs and services and how they may apply to Metroparks.
- Track lifecycle of all programs and terminate programs that are in the decline and saturation phase.
- Establish themed programs and offer four seasons of programs.
- Stronger marketing of programs, offerings need to be spread to all parks in the system.
- Update policies for programs, such as pricing and partnership development.
- Develop a cost recovery plan for all programs that have a fee to fall into the important and value added classification. This needs to include a cost of service analysis to determine the level of tax subsidy each program and person receives.
- Better staff training of part-time employees is needed before the programs start.
- Enhance standards for programming, education, and interpretation.
- Incorporate stronger performance measures when demonstrating key outcomes of programs on the system.
- Incorporate additional special events throughout the park system.
- Incorporate a culture of quality management as outlined in the program section of the report.
- Incorporate more exposure and enhance cross marketing between volunteers and members.
- Ensure volunteer record keeping systems are coordinated so that it is easy to determine who is volunteering and where.
- Keep volunteers fully informed of district activities to gain support and advocacy from this important pool of agency representatives.



PARTNERSHIPS

Our Vision for Partnerships is to build capacity and advocacy through effective partnerships that are financially equitable and provide the residents a higher level of services than Metroparks can provide alone.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- All partnerships will have a working agreement that is updated every two years with measurable outcomes. Yearly reporting to the park commissioners should occur.
- All partnerships will track costs to measure the public investment made into the partnership to demonstrate the level of public value and service.
- All partnerships will incorporate a culture that focuses on regular collaborative planning, communications, and annual reporting.
- Develop a policy for public / public partnerships, public / not-for-profit partnerships and public / private partnerships.

PARK MAINTENANCE

Our vision for park maintenance is to provide clean, safe parks that are natural by design with maintenance that exceed the user's expectations and provides an enjoyable experience.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The maintenance staff will create a true cost of service to maintain parks, trails, and amenities to determine all unit costs. This will help to determine the level of productivity, efficiency, and management standards.

- Maintain a maintenance management plan for the district to focus on standards, costs, and staff levels needed.
- Expand technology use into park operations.
- Consider going to district management versus site-based management to eliminate operational silos.
- Maintenance staff needs to support volunteers in their operations. Staff training is required so staff can learn to appreciate and effectively use volunteers.
- The staff in each park needs to know the budget they have to work with and then manage it with measurable outcomes.
- Set policies like standard opening and closing times needs to be addressed.
- Consider a separate trail crew to build and maintain trails to move the implementation of trails along at a faster pace.
- Contracting of services needs to be explored in high cost to service areas.
- Consider reducing the number of ground tech levels from five to two.
- The district should consider having regional managers over all services in the designated regions. All divisions that provide services in that region would report to that person.
- An updated signage plan is needed in the parks to help guide users.

FINANCE

Our vision for finance is to provide well documented, accurate, and timely finance information for the board and staff that meets all the state requirements for effective reporting and supports the financial principles determined in this plan.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to use and enhances a system-wide approach to developing the yearly operational budget involving key staff.
- Complete improvements toward how purchasing and capital improvement systems are processed.
- Develop a stronger full-time staff-training program to improve more effective use of existing systems.
- Help staff in the field to determine their true unit costs to produce a unit of service.
- Consider developing a business development office to help staff implement business principles in each division.
- Develop a long-term financial plan for the agency that is consistent with the goals and objectives of Metroparks and support the initiatives and strategies as reflected in district approved plans. Agency goals and objectives, which affect park-operating funds, need to be consistent with fund availability and financial projections.
- Use a minimum of a three-year financial management plan for the general operations and capital funds. Total projections need to be up to ten years. The plan will be updated annually and used as the basis for the development of budgets and revenue / fee schedules.
- Metroparks budget will be developed as an operational based budget, ensuring the highest possible accuracy of revenue projections and the review and evaluation of budget expenditure requirements. Annual budget plan submittals will meet the finance department's budget requirements. All efforts will be made to optimize productivity for improved service delivery at the lowest possible cost levels to the agency.
- The annual operating budget will project and produce a positive cash balance for each fiscal year. A cost recovery commitment for the budget-planning year will be developed and integrated into the financial management plan.

- Management of the Education Fund for budgeting purposes will be at a cost / profit center level so that each program and function is reviewed annually for revenue projections and expenditure needs. Where possible, each cost center will produce some income and keep expenditures to the lowest possible levels.
- A Managed Reserve will be maintained within the annual carryover at a sufficient level to allow for yearly cash flow requirements and to provide for financing unforeseen emergency needs. The reserve will be a minimum of six months of the approved annual general fund expenditure budget. The Carryover Reserve shall be adjusted annually at the time the budget is adopted.
- Net revenue generated from the fiscal year, above that needed to sustain the reserve, and the general fund may be committed to special allocations as approved by the park district board. Funding priority of the special allocation will be given to CIP fund, land acquisition fund and for support of educational programs or other special funds.
- All revenue producing facilities will develop an annual business plan.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND MARKETING OPERATIONS

Our vision for Administration and Marketing is to develop systems, policies, and procedures that reduce bureaucracy and make it easy for staff in the field to manage their respective functions to achieve the outcomes that the board of park commissioners desire.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Update policies and procedures on an annual basis. Ensure that they create maximum flexibility for the staff in the field to do their work in a timely manner.
- Train staff on how to effectively work with volunteers and conduct on an annual basis to improve the value the district can gain from their contribution.
- Train staff on how to be a lead function or a support function in the work that they do.
- Develop a marketing and branding plan for the district.
- Update the district's website.
- Teach staff how to effectively use marketing data to make good decisions when programming their facilities and managing their park sites.

- Work to improve system communication via the daily update and weekly board reports. Establish a communication network posting results of performance outcomes on a monthly and quarterly basis.
- Update job descriptions and do a salary assessment every five years to ensure the district is meeting the pay level requirements to keep effective staff in place.
- Continue biannual performance evaluations for staff and supervisors to maximize everyone's capabilities and tie these to operational goals and objectives.
- Develop a succession plan for the district for key positions in the system.
- Develop a place in the organization where office systems can be effectively managed to the expectations of staff and the public.
- Make customer service the focus of the district's mission.
- Hold staff accountable through effective performance measures that are biannually.
- Develop a continuous improvement model for staff to center on for the services they provide.
- Work on collaboration between divisions to reduce silos through effective planning, which will improve trust and communication.
- Develop a technology plan for the district and update every year.
- Track workload management to ensure that people are not overloaded while others are not managed to the same expectation.

CONCLUSION

The board of park commissioners and staff has developed a great park system for the residents of Lucas County. The Toledo region has supported the district very well over the last 85 years. New leadership in the organization recognized the importance of effective planning by developing three separate planning documents to help guide the organization for the next 20 years. Each planning document supports a preferred future for the district in the functional area it represents. The Operational Assessment and Business Sustainability Report centers on how the organization operates and how it thinks on a daily basis. The recommendations outlined supports changes that the board of park commissioners, key leadership of the agency, and the staff (who directly delivers services) desires.

The information gathered in the report supports every functional division and the system as a whole. The recommendations follow accreditation guidelines for CAPRA as well as demonstrating best practices in the industry. The recommendations are both a continuation of existing practices as well as new objectives. They may not be easy to implement, but are necessary to move the organization forward in a positive and productive manner. Many of the recommendations will have never been tried before and the culture of the organization may resist them. However, if implemented, the organization will be stronger, more fluid and flexible. The results will create a better culture to work in. The challenge is before the staff to implement this plan. Let the process begin!



Manor House Garden

CHAPTER 2 – COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



KEY LEADERSHIP AND STAKEHOLDER SUMMARY

The Metroparks GIS planning department created an inventory of recreational service providers in 2013 providing a basis to identify potential future partnerships and supportive relationships to meet community expectations, needs or gaps in services. A baseline survey was also completed with comparable park districts in Ohio. Metroparks of the Toledo Area has contracted with SHOA to conduct an attitude and opinion survey with registered Lucas County voters on an annual basis for over ten years. The purpose of this survey is to measure the public perception, satisfaction and comprehensiveness of the park systems facilities management and service. In addition to evaluating the results of the 2012 and 2013 survey, PROS Consulting met with key leadership in the community, Metroparks Board of Commissioners, and staff to gather insight on their vision for the future of Metroparks. Observations were recorded representing a broad set of issues considered in the Operational Assessment and Business Sustainability Plan.

VISION FOR THE STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN

The stakeholders repeatedly indicated the importance of clean, safe, natural parks and the importance of leaving an open space legacy for future generations. That Metroparks provide good places for families and groups to visit yet provide opportunities to find solitude and tranquility. They offer up-to-date maintenance and amenities that celebrate nature. They offer nature and educational programs to the visitor. They are perceived to be “free” and this is an important perception.

The park system has been and needs to continue to be reliable and predictable. The parks are always as they are expected to be. Stakeholders indicated apprehension toward new items or directions that would throw a “curve-ball” into what people expect from Metroparks.

Locations of parks are important as people appreciate that a nice, beautiful park is reasonably assessable from any location in the county.

There are characteristic differences between the major reservations. Stakeholders indicated that the public values these differences.

Metroparks is observed as a responsible steward of public resources within the community. Metroparks has the trust of the community. It is a general perception that if Metroparks says it will do something, it will do so. And that the park district has a tremendous staff from top to bottom with a lot of internal procedures that work well.

Toledo supports four major public institutions: The Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo Zoo and Metroparks. All of these institutions instill a broad-based sense of pride.

The connectivity people make with their parks stays with them for many years.

VALUED MOST ABOUT METROPARKS' AMENITIES AND SERVICES

The agency's stated commitment to providing clean safe and natural parks is greatly appreciated. Each Metropark provides visual beauty. The park system is perceived to be responsive, predictable and accountable. Nature, habitat and important elements of local history are preserved within the parks.

What is undervalued? The Maumee River is extremely underappreciated and perhaps under-programmed by Metroparks. Excellent customer service is expected and perhaps taken for granted.



KEY OUTCOMES DESIRED

Metroparks of the Toledo Area wants to:

- Be recognized throughout the country as a great park system that is consistently meeting or exceeding public expectations.
- Be recognized as a leader in regional open space preservation, conservation, natural resource management, environmental education, interpretation and outdoor recreation.
- Be a regional contributor for wellness, family, and community values.
- Be known as a willing community partner.

KEY PROGRAM SERVICES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

Educational and interpretive programming needs to be expanded. The goal would be to engage all school systems in the county and region both in the parks and in classrooms. This should include programs that teach people of various ages how to enjoy out of door activities within the parks introducing outdoor skills and encouraging active life styles and engagement with the park system.

Partnerships should be developed or enhanced that promote the relationship between human health and ecological balance and the value of parks and open spaces as area to host active life styles.

While the marketing and image of the agency is very good, there needs to be more targeted communication to specific demographic segments. Marketing unique and significant features, programs and activities beyond the region and communicating to various user groups in the most effective methods.

“Best places” within the park system need to be showcased as a method of encouraging visitors to seek them out and visit other park areas. This would create a greater sense of place for the parks and stimulate destination travel within the region and drive users out to all parks at all times of the year. Examples might be the best sunrise, best bike path, best butterfly place, best view of the river, best wild flower location, etc.

The agency's commitment to ecological restoration needs to be communicated effectively to staff and the public.

Financial procedures, budget development, management, procurement and vendor payment need to be effective and understood and followed by all users.



RECREATION / EDUCATION FACILITIES AND / OR AMENITIES MOST NEEDED

The annual attitude and opinion survey indicate that trails and all trail related activities are highly valued. This is consistent with state and national trends. Trails are the most expected, common, and wide spread amenity across the park district. Efforts to monitor the use and conditions of all trails are critical. Methods to disperse trail use across the park system to avoid overcrowding and deterioration of user experience are important. Wildwood appears to be at or near capacity with this regard. Trails must clearly be marked for acceptable use and ranked for condition, length and user experience. Multipurpose trails must be designed appropriately.

User surveys and reservation rates indicate an adequate supply of reservation facilities and a high rate of satisfaction with support amenities like restrooms.

Nature-based programming, and specialized outdoor skill activities have high local interest as well as increasing participation in many nationally tracked user areas. Metroparks has begun to restore prior programming levels in addition to increasing staff investment for outdoor education.

With an increased investment in outdoor education, appropriate support facilities must be available for staff office work, equipment and supply storage and presentation space. These factors should be considered as new parks are being designed and built.

Small boat access to the Maumee River is weak at best. The increased small boat registration in Ohio, mirrors national recreational user trends; consequently opportunities for blue way trails should be explored and implemented as feasible. Partnerships should be explored for access to Maumee Bay and Lake Erie.

Single track / mountain bicycling trails should be considered to match local, state and national trends.

Methods to accurately monitor county population demographic as well as park user age groups should be established to adequately prepare and / or provide for various user needs and expectations.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Partnerships should be mutually beneficial with an equal return for services provided or benefits received. The park system should be receiving a service that would not otherwise be as effectively attained.

Metroparks has a significant number of partnerships ranging from volunteer friend groups at specific parks to sophisticated, three party arrangements such as the Toledo Botanical Garden, Inc.

The manner in which these arrangements are monitored or managed is inconsistent. The diversity of these partnerships is so broad that creating criteria to formally rank these relationships and establish a process for reporting, accountability and communication would be beneficial.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The demographic analysis provides an understanding of the population within Lucas County, Ohio. This analysis is reflective of the total population, and its key characteristics such as age segments, income levels, race, and ethnicity.

It is important to note that future projections are all based on historical patterns and unforeseen circumstances during or after the time of the projections could have a significant bearing on the validity of the final projections.

Understanding and periodically reviewing regional demographics is essential for being responsive to meeting service expectations and planning for operational and capital needs.

Please refer to Appendix A for additional demographic information.



Toledo Botanical Garden

CHAPTER 3 – PROGRAMMING AND PARTNERSHIP ANALYSIS



INTRODUCTION

As part of the planning process, the consulting team performed an assessment of the programs and services offered by Metroparks. The assessment offers an in-depth perspective of program and service offerings and helps identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities regarding programming. The assessment also assists in identifying core programs, program gaps within the community, key system-wide issues, and areas of improvement in determining future programs and services for residents. The consulting team based these program findings and comments from a review of information provided by the district, including program descriptions, participation statistics, financial data, website content, focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and discussions with staff. This report addresses the program offerings from a systems perspective for the entire portfolio of programs, as well as individual program information. It identifies key issues and presents recommendations for these issues, summarized at the end of this section.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

The Visitor Service Division, led by the Director of Programs, provides activities and services that encompass a wide variety of interests related to the district's purpose. Division staff is responsible for the management and implementation of programming, special community-wide events, and the operation of facilities. Staff in the Division is engaged year round in planning, implementing, conducting, and evaluating programs and events.

All functions within the division combine to provide hundreds of programs in the areas of history, nature, outdoor recreation, youth camps, and special events. In 2012, the park district served over 70,700 participants among all program areas. The Visitor Service Division also operates attractions such as the Wildwood Manor House, the Canal Experience at Providence, the Lathrop House, Oak Grove School, Johlin Cabin, and the National Center for Nature Photography.

In addition to the provision of services provided directly by the district at Metroparks' facilities, partnerships with other organizations are utilized throughout the service area. Through formal and informal cooperative relationships, partners assist with delivering select programs, training of Metroparks' staff, granting access to specialized facilities, and providing support to programs with supplies and materials.

The remainder of this chapter will discuss park district priorities, program lifecycles, program finances, standards, volunteerism, partnerships, and marketing in greater detail.

PRIORITIES AND CORE PROGRAMS

The mission of Metroparks is to "conserve the region's natural resources by creating, developing, improving, protecting, and promoting clean, safe, and natural parks and open spaces for the benefit, enjoyment, education, and general welfare of the public."

To help achieve this mission, the district has identified a number of operating principles regarding visitor experiences, education, safety, facility management, communication, and organizational excellence. Of those, several key principles should be given particular attention in this program assessment to frame recommendations and to ultimately help the park district achieve their long-term goals. They include:

- Metroparks recognizes that disseminating knowledge through public programs, events, and communication is the key to building community awareness and stewardship in natural, historical, and cultural preservation.
- Metroparks will measure success when serving visitors through the standards of excellent service and rewarding experiences.
- Metroparks will protect the health and welfare of visitors, volunteers, and employees and the integrity of natural, historical, and cultural resources.
- Metroparks will work actively to preserve the best examples of Northwest Ohio's natural areas for public enjoyment, transcending all other purposes and uses.

- Metroparks is committed to a workplace fostering employee wellbeing, development and satisfaction within a culture of respect, creativity and innovation.
- Metroparks will embrace and encourage the diverse ideas, cultures, and thinking of its employees and community.
- Metroparks' leaders will promote teamwork and respect in all areas of operations. Employee involvement and empowerment will be a hallmark of Metroparks workplace environment.
- Professional development will be encouraged and available for all employees. Metroparks recognizes reward and recognition of employees as a best practice and vital component of organizational development.
- Continuous improvement through performance management provides Metroparks' owners with the highest value for their tax dollar.
- Knowledge sharing across work units ensures that Metroparks is an agile and responsive organization.

It is important to identify core programs based on current and future needs to create a sense of focus around specific program areas of greatest importance to the community. Public recreation is challenged by the premise of being all things to all people, especially in a community such as Toledo. The core program philosophy assists staff in being able to focus on what is most important. Programs are categorized as core programs if they meet a majority of the following categories:

- The program has been provided for a long period of time (over 4-5 years) and / or is expected by the community.
- The program consumes a large portion (5% or more) of the district's overall budget.
- The program is offered 3-4 seasons per year.
- The program has wide demographic appeal.
- There is a tiered level of skill development available within the program's offerings.
- There is full-time staff responsible for the program.
- There are facilities designed specifically to support the program.
- The district controls a significant percentage (20% or more) of the local market.



EXISTING CORE PROGRAM AREAS

The core program areas for the district are listed below. It is important to recognize that limits on the district's staffing, resources, and availability of space may hinder some of the efforts to maintain or expand core programs; therefore, it is essential that staff commit to a concerted effort towards managing and prioritizing core program areas throughout fluctuations in resource availability.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

Environmental program area includes a district-wide approach to nature education, inspiring a love of the outdoors, native species, preservation, and conservation. This area includes public programming, requested programming, and targeted school outreach. Metroparks encourages park visitors to be active in the outdoors and to foster a healthy lifestyle. Environmental programs have a fee policy and pricing strategy that is reviewed annually and approved by the board of park commissioners. This includes free and fee-based programming. Fees are competitively priced within the local marketplace and priced to be affordable to most. Within the environmental program structure there is specific focus on school outreach tied to curriculum standards and an emphasis on onsite field trip experiences. A portion of programming is expanding to greater emphasis on outdoor skills such as canoeing, kayaking, biking, and camping. Public offerings include programs that align with trends such as bird watching, geocaching, running, and walking.

Features of the program area include nature programs, nature walks, bird studies, geocaching, canoe programs, scout programs, and nature photography. Learning levels are age appropriate from toddler to advanced adult learners enrolled in Volunteer Walk Leader Training. Many programs are offered in parks within the Metroparks system, which represents nearly 12,000 acres of public lands, including some lands that are restricted access only for programs. Natural interpretation includes lakes and rivers, oak savanna, prairies, wetlands, and woodlands.

Historical data has been tracked to measure such goals as program attendance, gross program revenue, program participant satisfaction, Lucas County school children served, percentage of Lucas County elementary schools reached, and program marketing effectiveness. Desired outcomes of environmental programs include inspiring a love of nature, a commitment to preservation, understanding of the local natural features, and plant and animal communities as well as the park district's value to the community as a whole.



Metroparks Summer Camp

NATURE CAMPS

In 2014, the district will be in its sixth season of summer nature camps. Week-long day camps are offered for children ages 3 to 14. These camp offerings include:

- Wee Workshop Preschool Summer Camp, ages 3-5 with parent (Wildwood and Oak Openings);
- Metroparks Explorers / Earthstar, ages 5-7 (five sessions at Oak Openings and Wildwood);
- Nature Camp / Camp Badger, ages 8-12 (five sessions at Oak Openings and Wildwood);
- And Art of Nature, ages 7-14 (single-day themed camp experiences to explore natural materials and nature as inspiration to create works of art).

In 2013, the nature camp season ran from June 6 until August 16 for a total of ten weeks with 16 camps. Camp options include a one-day experience to weekly day camps. Teens ages 13-18 are trained and utilized as counselors in training / camp staff. Other staffing includes Metroparks' volunteers, interns, and paid staff. All camps are fee based and competitively priced within the market.

Overall, nature camps aim to cultivate life-long supporters and users of Metroparks. Other goals and outcomes for this program area include connecting kids with the outdoors, introducing nature education, fostering place-based identity, providing exposure to other Metroparks or mission-related activities, and encouraging participants to make Metroparks a part of their lives. Through each camp experience, children will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the natural world and the animals and plants discussed during camp and the natural environment. Youth will be excited and push their boundaries. The children and their families will be inspired to discover more. With each camp experience, children will be inspired to know more and impact those around them about nature and humans' impact on world.

HISTORICAL PROGRAMS

The historical program area includes both programmatic opportunities and site-based programming. The district has interpreter led, self-directed, and community outreach programs. Onsite programming includes:

- Johlin Black Swamp Cabin at Pearson Metropark
- Manor House and Oak Grove Schoolhouse at Wildwood Preserve
- Fort Miamis and Fallen Timbers Battlefield part of Side Cut Metropark
- Lathrop House-Underground Railroad

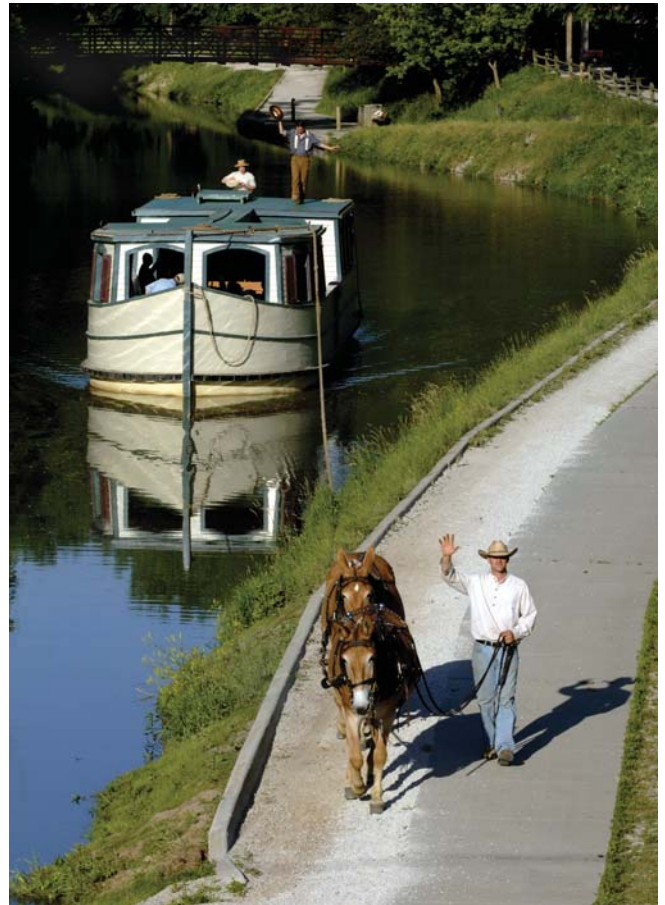
Programs are centered on lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on history experiences. The sites provide the opportunity for first and third person interpretation with period appropriate clothing and furnishings. As possible, the guests are immersed at actual historic sites significant to Northwest Ohio. Metroparks' historical interpretations span from 1794 until 1974. General history programs, both public and requested, include focus on the history of northwest Ohio, provide a glimpse into American Indians of the area, early settlement, frontier education, significant American military battles, the underground railroad, the pre- and post-World War II era history, WPA projects, the auto baron industrial age, and the role northwest Ohio played in shaping our country's history.

The internal goals and desired outcomes for the historical programs' area include engaged and informed participants, the cultivation of a sense of ownership in preservation and understanding of the value and significance of the park district to the community, opportunities for volunteer involvement, and always a positive customer experience. These components come together to cultivate and ensure support and sustainability for Metroparks.

THE CANAL EXPERIENCE

The canal experience at Providence Metropark provides the visitor a step back in time to discover what life was like along the Miami and Erie Canal in 1876. The canal experience includes The Volunteer, a reproduction, mule-drawn canal boat; the Isaac Ludwig Mill, a working water powered saw and grist mill; more than a mile of the original Miami and Erie Canal and Towpath; Lock #44; the General Store; and the Scenic Providence Dam.

Providence's unique feature is having an original canal lock that functions and that participants can ride a replica canal boat through the functioning lock. Goals and outcomes for the program area include helping visitors understand the history of the Miami and Erie Canal and the town of Providence, Ohio, including and the role that the canal boat played in the transportation and development of the area, observe and understand the operation of a water-powered saw and grist mill, and observe and understand the operation of a canal lock.



SPECIAL EVENTS

The special events program area is designed to create opportunities for people to use the parks, make connections in meaningful ways to the parks, and create target market opportunities. It is designed to encourage fun, family friendly activities and an opportunity for visitors to visit parks they would not usually visit. An environmental or historical educational component is always included. The program area is designed to create signature events for the community on an annual or regular basis.

Three major annual special events include the Happy Trails 5K, Metrobarks, and Holidays in the Manor House. These programs have been longstanding Metroparks' offerings for up to 40 years. A newer special event added in 2013 is an Under the Moon fun run program.

- The Happy Trails 5K is an annual run / walk event that draws individuals and families of all ability levels. It is a fee-based summer weekend event that has grown in popularity and participation over the course of the last ten years. The program is produced in partnership with community retailers, media, running clubs, and special interest groups. The number of participants in this event makes it one of the top five runs / walks in the area. The event is staffed and organized by Metroparks and a large contingent of volunteers, who give hundreds of hours of volunteer time per year. It is a key special event that brings together participants, the business community, running groups, and



Happy Trails 5K



Metrobarks

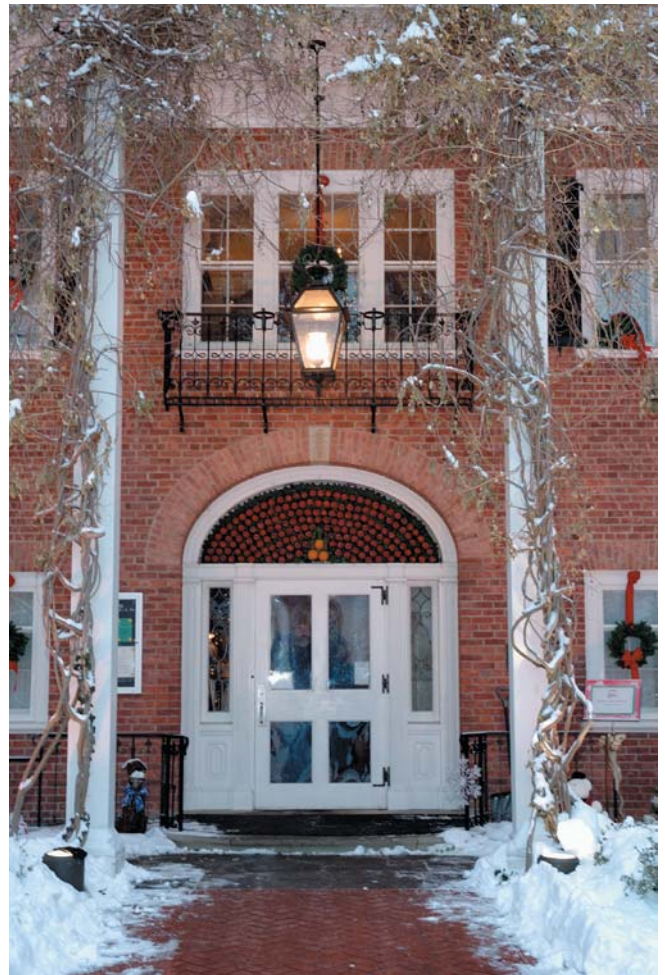
volunteers. Happy Trails encourages healthy outdoor activity in a natural park setting. It promotes both individual and group family participation, and the revenue raised benefits Metroparks Trail Fund. In 2013 there were nearly 800 participants.

- Metrobarks is special event that celebrates dogs. It is a day-long summer weekend festival that includes retail vendors, rescue groups, media, special dog demonstrations, and competitions. The event is free and open to the public and all dogs are “encouraged to bring their owners.” The benefits of the program include a significant well-developed relationship with the largest local newspaper in the production of a Pet Idol contest that culminates on the naming of the winning dog. In addition, the Humane Society hosts a 5K run / walk with dogs and their owners. The event is hosted by Metroparks with community partners that form a committee that plans the event year to year. Committee members include representatives from area rescue groups, retailers, and the media. Metrobarks generates revenue through vendor fees and the money is designated to support Metroparks' educational programs. This program has grown in popularity; participation in 2013 generated more than 1,500 in attendance.

- Holidays in the Manor House is Metroparks most iconic special event. 2013 marks the 38th anniversary of this holiday tradition. Visitation in 2012 was nearly 20,000 people. This program brings together hundreds of volunteers to decorate and staff a 32,000 square foot Georgian-style mansion located in the heart of Metroparks most popular preserve. The week-long event is free and generates a great deal of positive media attention. Given its long history, this event is unique in becoming a multigenerational special occasion. This event spreads out into additional programs that take place during the event, including a craft show and café run by Volunteers In Parks, as well as kids and adult activities that include storytelling and wreath making.
- The newest special event, Under the Moon, is an after dark 5K run / walk for individuals, families, and groups of people of all abilities. It provides participants an opportunity to experience the parks after dark. It is minimally fee based. Metroparks' partners with running groups, the media, retailers, and volunteers promote and provide the event.

Over the course of the special event program area history, programs have been evaluated for mission relevance and success. Each special event is designed to bring together public participants, the business community, other nonprofits, and volunteers.

The internal goals and desired outcomes are mirrored in the overall benefits of the program, including cross functionality throughout all divisions and departments of the park district. Each team plays a role in special event production to ensure efficiency, joint ownership, and ultimately a successful event. Overall, desired outcomes include happy participants, engaged volunteer involvement, strong community partnerships, mission-based outreach, and revenue generation where relevant.



Holidays at the Manor House

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL CORE PROGRAM AREAS

In addition to the core program areas listed above, Metroparks should consider designating the following program areas as core. They reflect services currently provided and / or areas that have been identified for future growth in strategic alignment with the Metroparks mission and anticipated demographic trends:

- Health and wellness (emphasis on outdoor fitness recreation)
- Senior recreation, wellness, and enrichment
- Special population recreation and enrichment
- Volunteerism
- Adventure activities
- Urban youth enrichment

STAKEHOLDER GROUP FINDINGS

As part of the planning process for Metroparks, PROS Consulting conducted stakeholder group discussions with the board of park commissioners, department heads, managers, line staff, part-time staff, and seasonal staff. Participants provided the following insights about district programs and services (a full report of stakeholder group findings can be found earlier in this Master Plan):

- The existing mission does not address education, interpretation, or recreation.
- There is a need to build the Strategic Plan on key themes such as Health, Sustainability, Customer Service, and Community Pride.
- Marketing of services, programs, and park amenities could be improved.
- There should be a growing emphasis on programs geared toward health and wellness.
- As the senior population continues to increase, more programs should be targeted to them.
- A more strategic approach could be used in forming, managing, and evaluating partnerships.
- Visitation and participation in programs needs to be more balanced.
- Staff is afraid of being over-extended.
- There could be improvements regarding how to serve the community as a whole.
- Some standards are lacking in terms of programming, education, and interpretation.
- The agency is very bureaucratic given the size of the system.
- Updated policies are needed for pricing, partnerships, marketing, program development, and program evaluation.
- Program and calendar scheduling is an issue that needs to be addressed.
- The registration system is cumbersome and not user friendly.
- The website needs to be updated.



LIFECYCLE ANALYSIS

A lifecycle analysis involves reviewing every program identified by Metroparks' staff to determine the stage of growth or decline for each as a way of informing strategic decisions about the overall program portfolio managed by the district. This analysis is not based on strict quantitative data, but rather is based on staff members' knowledge of their program areas. Figure 1 shows the percentage distribution of the various lifecycle categories of the district's programs. These percentages were obtained by comparing the number of programs in each individual stage with the total number of programs listed by staff.

Overall, the lifecycle analysis results indicate a fair balance of all programs across the lifecycle. A combined total of 67% of programs fall into the Introduction, Take-Off, and Growth stages. The consulting team recommends that this total be between 50-60%, therefore, Metroparks appears to be providing ample new programs to align with trends and to help meet the evolving needs of the community. Additionally, several of these programs are also good candidates for revenue generation due to their novelty, popularity, and / or growth.

However, it is also important to have a stable core segment of programs that are in the Mature stage. Currently, Metroparks has about 25% of their programs in this category. The consulting team recommends this to be about 40% so as to provide stability to the overall program portfolio, but without dominating the portfolio with programs that are advancing to the later stages of the lifecycle. Programs in the Mature stage should be tracked for signs that they are entering the Saturation or Decline stages. According to staff, there is an ongoing process to evaluate program participation and trends to ensure that program offerings continue to meet the community's needs.

A total of about 8% of programs are saturated or declining. Programs in the Decline stage must be closely reviewed to evaluate repositioning or eliminating them. The consulting team's recommendation is to modify these programs to begin a new lifecycle with the Introductory stage as well as to continue to add new programs based on community needs and trends. Staff should complete a lifecycle review on an annual basis and ensure that the percentage distribution closely aligns with desired performance. Furthermore, the district could include a performance measure of percentage of total number of new programs offered annually as an incentive for more innovation.

Lifecycle Stage	Description	Actual Program Distribution		Recommended Distribution
Introduction	New program, modest participation	13%	67% total	50-60% total
Take-Off	Rapid participation growth	19%		
Growth	Moderate, but consistent population growth	35%		
Mature	Slow participation growth	25%	25%	40%
Saturation	Minimal to no participation growth, extreme competition	4%	8% total	0-10% total
Decline	Declining participation	4%		

Figure 1 - Program Lifecycle Analysis - Current Distribution and Recommendations

PROGRAM FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

Finding ways to enhance revenue year-on-year and improve service-pricing strategies are priorities for Metroparks. To that end, the consulting team conducted a review of program cost recovery and pricing strategies based on information provided by district staff.

COST RECOVERY STRATEGIES

According to information provided to the consulting team, cost recovery performance is currently tracked at an overall level. Metroparks aims to recover 20-30% of costs for all programs offered directly by the district. In addition to tracking cost recovery at the overall district level, the consulting team recommends using core program areas as an additional basis for categorization. Cost recovery targets should be identified for each program area, at least, and for specific programs or events if necessary. The previously identified core programs would serve as an effective breakdown for tracking cost recovery metrics, which would theoretically group programs with similar cost recovery and subsidy goals.

Targets should reflect the degree to which the program area provides a public versus private good. The district should subsidize programs providing public benefits; programs providing private benefits should seek to recover costs

and / or generate revenue for other services.

Generally, non-core programs, which are less critical to the organizational mission, should aim to yield a higher cost recovery rate to sustain themselves, leaving the limited tax-based appropriations to fund core programs.

To assist the plan and implement cost recovery policies, PROS has developed the following definitions presented in Figure 2 to help classify specific programs within program areas.

Programs falling into the Important or Value-Added classifications generally represent programs that receive lower priority for subsidization. Important programs contribute to the organizational mission, but are not essential to it; therefore, cost recovery for these programs should be high (i.e., at least 80% overall). Value-added programs are not critical to the mission and should be prevented from drawing on limited public funding, so overall cost recovery for these programs should be near to or in excess of 100%.

To develop specific cost recovery targets, full cost of accounting should be created on each class or program that accurately calculates direct and indirect costs. Cost recovery goals are established once these numbers are in place, and Metroparks' staff should be trained on this process.

Category	Description	Cost Recovery	Subsidy
Core-Essential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of the organizational mission Serves a majority of the community "We <i>must</i> offer this program." 	None to moderate	High to complete
Important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important to the community Serves large portions of the community "We <i>should</i> offer this program." 	Moderate	Moderate
Value-Added	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced community offerings Serves niche groups "It would be <i>nice</i> to offer this program." 	High to complete	Little to none

Figure 2 - Cost Recovery and Subsidy Program Categories

PRICING STRATEGIES

The pricing of programs and services should be established based on the cost of services, overlaid onto program areas or specific events, and strategically adjusted according to market factors and / or policy goals. Currently, Metroparks uses several pricing strategies for each core program area (see Figure 3).

All pricing strategies are used by the district except for weekday / weekend and prime / non-prime time differential pricing. Early bird pricing, another temporal strategy, is only used for the Happy Trails 5K. Pricing based on competition (market rate), cost recovery goals, and Metroparks memberships are used in every core program area.

The degree to which pricing strategies are used currently is healthy. Staff should continue to monitor the effectiveness of the various pricing strategies they employ and make adjustments as necessary within the policy frameworks that guide the overall pricing philosophies of Metroparks. It is especially

important, however, for yearly competitor and other service providers to be benchmarked, shopped, and evaluated, in order to monitor changes and track how those other providers compare with Metroparks' programs.

Furthermore, the consulting team recommends that mini-business plans (2-3 pages) be created for each core program service area on a yearly basis. These plans should evaluate the program area based on meeting the outcomes desired for participants, cost recovery, percentage of the market and business controls, cost of service, pricing strategy for the next year, and marketing strategies that are to be implemented. If developed regularly and consistently, they can be effective tools for budget construction and justification processes. Furthermore, these plans can address other financial and operational needs such as cash collection standards and refund process standards that need to be incorporated.

	Environmental Programs	Summer Camps	Historical Programs	Canal Experience	Special Events
Age Segment				✓	✓
Family / Household Status					✓
Residency	✓		✓	✓	
Weekday / Weekend					
Prime / Non-Prime Time					
Group Discounts	✓		✓	✓	✓
By Location			✓		
By Competition (Market Rate)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
By Cost Recovery Goals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
By Customer's Ability to Pay		✓	✓		
By Metroparks Membership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Earlybird Registration					✓

Figure 3 - Pricing Strategies by Core Program Area



PROGRAM STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The relationship between meeting the needs of the community, achieving the agency mission, and executing service delivery is of critical importance. With an understanding of this important dynamic, the following section provides an analysis of the service system and includes building on the service foundation that already exists in the district. As observed from the discussions with and data from the staff, the community does seem to exhibit a high level of satisfaction with the offerings provided by Metroparks. Based on the consulting team's observations, the district's operations and program offerings are above average based on nationwide trends, but enhancements to performance management practices would yield overall improvements to the services provided to the community. This section is intended to move Metroparks to a higher level of sophistication in quality management and into the realm of state- and national-level best practices.

PROGRAM STANDARDS

The practice of using program standards is essential for agencies desiring to perform at high levels and that aspire to be community and industry leaders. One of the most significant issues in managing a program system includes the challenges faced with the complexity associated with thousands of service transactions, in-person and online, from multiple staff members dealing with a diverse audience at a variety of facilities within the system. Furthermore, the heavy reliance on part-time and seasonal staff in the service delivery process creates even greater challenges. These dynamics result in significant program and service quality variation.

In reviewing the program assessment information collected from staff, there is significant evidence of the ongoing use of performance measures throughout the district to gauge performance.

Examples of measures in place include:

- Total participants
- Participant to staff ratios
- Program cancellation rate
- Percentage of local schools reached
- Customer satisfaction level
- Customer retention rate
- Social media participants / followers
- Positive media events / occasions
- Negative media events / occasions
- Donations

Many performance measures are used across all core program areas, and several others are used only for particular program types. This is acceptable, and even desirable, as long as the universal measures are reflective of core performance outcomes are applicable across all district programming, and that specific / specialized measures are used to track critical attributes unique to certain programs. According to the consulting team's observations, however, there is a danger of Metroparks using performance measurement in excess, creating a situation wherein staff are hampered by the bureaucratic process of tracking performance rather than benefiting from it. Again, this issue can be mitigated by identifying critical program outcomes, developing a limited yet comprehensive set of performance metrics, and deploying them across the district with an emphasis on efficient measurement by staff.

Additional performance metrics to consider, if they align with desired organizational outcomes, include the following:

- Household percentage of program participation
- Percent of programs in introduction and growth stage
- Market penetration by age group
- Program distribution by age group
- Customer satisfaction towards specific program attributes, such as:
 - Registration system
 - Customer service
 - Facility cleanliness
 - Instructor quality
 - Available program times
 - Perceived safety

VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Today's economic climate and political realities require most public park and recreation departments to seek productive and meaningful partnerships with both community organizations and individuals to deliver quality and seamless services to their residents. These relationships should be mutually beneficial to each party to better meet overall community needs and expand the positive impact of the agency's mission. Because of the constraints facing Metroparks, effective partnerships and meaningful volunteerism are key strategy areas for the district to meet the needs of the community in the years to come.



Volunteer Trail Patrol

PARTNERSHIPS

Metroparks has a burgeoning partnership network that shows strong signs for further growth. Current partners include school districts, private businesses, media, nonprofit organizations, and foundations. A community and organizational goal for Metroparks is to further expand and formalize partnerships for the district. The initial step in developing multiple partnerships in the community that expand on existing relationships is to have an overall partnership philosophy that is supported by a policy framework for managing these relationships. Many times, partnerships are inequitable to the public agency and do not produce reasonable shared benefits between parties. The recommended policies will promote fairness and equity within the existing and future partnerships, while helping staff to manage against potential internal and external conflicts. The district must adopt certain partnership principles for existing and future partnerships to work effectively. These partnership principles are as follows:

- All partnerships require a working agreement with measurable outcomes and will be evaluated on a regular basis. This should include reports to the district on the performance and outcomes of the partnership.
- All partnerships should track costs associated with the partnership investment to demonstrate the shared level of equity.
- All partnerships should maintain a culture that focuses on collaborative planning on a regular basis, regular communications, and annual reporting on performance and outcomes.

Partnerships can be pursued and developed with other public entities, such as neighboring cities, schools, colleges, state or federal agencies; nonprofit organizations; and with private for-profit organizations. There are recommended standard policies and practices that will apply to any partnership, and those that are unique to relationships with private for-profit entities.



Metroparks Mascots – Otis, Owlberta and Boggs

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Metroparks' staff is engaged in marketing and promotion to varying degrees, including facilitating the production of a program guide, news releases, program information, media requests, and other communication and promotion tasks. Overall, marketing and public relations efforts are of relatively high quality, particularly toward school / youth programming. But in an effort to further enhance these labors, it is a stated priority of the district to enhance communication and marketing activities to increase public awareness of Metroparks' programs and services among all residents of the district, particularly minority groups and nonusers. These goals were also articulated by focus groups and are prevalent throughout the organization.

CHAPTER 4 – PARK CLASSIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS



PARK DESIGN PRINCIPLES

In developing design principles for parks, it is important that each park be programmed, planned, and designed to meet the needs of its service area and classification within the overall system. The term “programming” when used in the context of planning and developing parkland, refers to a list of uses and facilities, and does not always include staff-run programs. The program for a site can include such elements as shelters, restrooms, trails, natural resource stewardship, open meadows, nature preserves, or interpretive areas. These types of amenities are categorized as lead or support components. The needs of the population of the park it is intended to serve, should be considered and accommodated at each park. Every park regardless of type needs to have an established set of outcomes and when those outcomes are established, the park designers need to design those outcomes, including operational and maintenance cost outcomes.

Each park classification category serves a specific purpose, and the features and facilities in the park must be designed for the number of age segments the park is intended to serve, the desired length of stay deemed appropriate, and the uses it has been assigned. Recreation needs and services required differ based on the age segments that make up the community. A varying number of age segments will be accommodated with the park program, depending on the classification of the park. The age segments are:

- Ages 2-5
- Ages 6-8
- Ages 9-12
- Ages 13-17
- Ages 18-24
- Ages 25-34
- Ages 35-44
- Ages 45-54
- Ages 55-64
- Ages 65-75
- Ages 76+

REGIONAL PARK

A regional park serves a large area of several communities, residents with a city or county, or across multiple counties. Depending on activities with a regional park, users may travel as many as 60 miles for a visit. Regional parks include recreational opportunities such as boating, camping, conservation-wildlife viewing, overlooks, site-specific amenities, and fishing. Although regional parks usually have a combination of passive areas and active facilities, they are likely to be predominantly natural resource based parks. Common regional park attributes include:

- Common size of park: 100 to 1,000 acres.
- Service radius: 4 acres per 1,000 residents.
- Length of stay: All-day experience.
- Amenities: 10 to 12 amenities to create a signature facility (lake, regional playground, 3+ reservable shelters, camping, outdoor recreation / extreme sports amenities in place, nature center, gardens, trails, public restrooms, concessions, restaurant, ample parking, special event site.
- Revenue producing facilities: More than two; park designed to produce revenue to offset operational costs.
- Land usage: Up to 20 percent active / 80 percent passive.
- Programming: More than four recreation experiences per age segment with at least four core programs provided in the park.
- Maintenance Standards: Level two mode of maintenance with the exception of entrances receiving level one maintenance mode care.
- Signage: Strong signage throughout the park.
- Landscaping: Strong focal entrances and landscaping throughout the park.
- Parking: Sufficient for all amenities.



GREENWAYS AND MULTIPURPOSE TRAILS

Multiuse trails are corridors of land recognized for their ability to connect people and places. Linking neighborhoods, parks, recreation facilities, attractions, and natural areas with a multiuse trail fulfills two guiding principles simultaneously: protecting natural areas along corridors and providing people with a way to access and enjoy them. Multiuse trails also offer a safe, alternative form of transportation, substantial health benefits, habitat enhancements for plants and wildlife, and unique opportunities for outdoor education and cultural interpretation. Greenways and multipurpose trails include:

- Age segments served: 2 to 90.
- Amenities: walk, bike, run, equestrian.
- Lighting: At trailheads and high use areas.
- Amenities: parking, restrooms at trailheads, safety / emergency phones, some small neighborhood rest area parks along the trails for relief of runners or bicyclist.
- Signage: Half-mile markers and “where you are” kiosks.
- Maintenance standards: higher than maintenance levels of surrounding neighborhood, with a consistent minimum level throughout the city.
- Other: 12 feet or wider, strong color scheme, connectivity to signature / regional parks / facilities or attractions.

CHAPTER 5 – FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



DATA COLLECTION

This section of the report presents the financial assessment of Metroparks of the Toledo Area as a part of the strategic plan process. As a key element of the Plan, PROS Consulting reviewed available information to assess the financial situation of the district. The revenues, expenditures, and capital funds were analyzed to identify trends and assess the district's financial integrity. The cost recovery for facilities, programs and services at major functional levels has been analyzed to assess the cost of service readiness.

DATA REVIEWED

The PROS team reviewed the detailed cost and activity information prepared by the district staff. Following is a list of the cost and activity data reviewed by PROS:

- District Financial Statements for years ending 2008 through 2012
- District 2014 Draft Budget Book
- Financial Summary from Workshop, June 2013
- General Fund Multi-Year – Forecast 2014

FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

The operations reports provided by district staff were analyzed to assess the financial situation of Metroparks. The information for this section is from the Audited Financial Statements for 2008 through 2012.

FINANCIAL STRENGTH

The district has experienced increasing financial strength for each year shown in Figure 4. The total assets and net assets have increased for each year in the study period. The total net assets amounts are an indicator of the capital maintenance, land acquisitions and investment in the total system.

Cash balances provide flexibility with respect to managing programs, maintaining assets, and meeting the changing needs of the district. The cash plus cash investments increased significantly between fiscal years 2008 and 2012. The fiscal year 2012 cash plus cash equivalents is 129% greater than the fiscal year 2008.

For such a large agency, the total liabilities are minor as of the year ending 2012.

The unrestricted net assets show strength in operations and maintenance of the system. The unrestricted net assets increased each year for fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

The statements and reports show a financially strong entity. The district continues to invest in the system and to maintain system assets.

CASH RESERVES

The cash and investments are compared to the total expenditures in Figure 5. The cash and investments have increased in relation to the total expenditures over the period. PROS recommends a range of cash and investments between two and three months to cover unexpected revenue drops, and / or unusual and emergency expenditures. The cash and investment totals are above the high target ranges for all years. The high number of months of expenditures indicates that the district should have sufficient resources to improve and maintain the district's assets.

PROPERTY TAX REVENUES

The revenue for the park system is primarily derived from voted tax levies. There are currently two levies providing income for the organization, a 1.4 mill levy that will be up for renewal in 2017 and a .9 mill levy that may be renewed in 2022. The .9 mill levy was passed in 2012 replacing a .3 mill levy more than replacing lost tax revenue. As these two ten year levies are subject to renewal at five-year intervals the system has great stability with ample opportunity to anticipate and adjust as needed. Between fiscal years ending 2008 and 2012, the taxable property values have decreased by 13.6% or approximately 3.58% per year as shown in Figure 6. Assessed real property values decreased by 11% over the five-year period, but the public utility values decreased by 18.6% and the personal property values have been phased out by the state and now come back to the district as a State Reimbursement

Fiscal Year Ending	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Cash and Investments	\$9,708,381	\$13,861,781	\$17,479,076	\$19,781,826	\$22,190,604
Long-Term Liabilities	\$360,780	\$350,977	\$361,133	\$405,618	\$429,454
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$8,598,873	\$10,594,027	\$13,084,448	\$14,865,137	\$16,901,605
Total Net Assets	\$70,143,563	\$75,820,143	\$82,847,778	\$91,077,337	\$95,116,882

Figure 4 - Selected Financial Statement Balances

Fiscal Year Ending	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Expenditures	\$14,660,887	\$12,884,176	\$11,988,789	\$10,495,704	\$12,650,033
Cash and Investments	\$9,708,381	\$13,861,781	\$17,479,076	\$19,781,826	\$22,190,604
Cash as a % of Expenditures	66%	108%	146%	188%	175%
Expenditure Coverage (months)	7.9	12.9	17.5	22.6	21.1

Figure 5 - Cash and Investments to Expenditures

under Intergovernmental Revenue (Entitlements). In some areas of the U.S., the mortgage markets have experienced significant difficulty with respect to interest rates and foreclosures. These issues can result in flat or decreased property values, which result in flat or decreased property tax revenues.

Fiscal Year Ending	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Lucas County					
Real Property	\$8,656,759,040	\$8,694,858,210	\$7,784,913,254	\$7,707,789,720	\$7,707,789,720
Tangible Personal Property	\$244,965,756	\$25,942,257			
Public Utility Property	\$277,551,480	\$206,265,870	\$221,492,520	\$225,867,030	\$225,867,030
Total	\$9,179,276,286	\$8,927,066,337	\$8,006,405,774	\$7,933,565,750	\$7,933,656,750

Figure 6 - Property Tax Values

CAPITAL ADDITIONS

For 2013, the district has an annual capital budget of \$9.1 million that is split between the Land Acquisition Fund and Capital Construction Fund. Annual capital expenditures are an indication of an entity's willingness to invest and maintain its system assets. The district has added 2.3% to 19.5% to the total capital assets each year during fiscal years 2008 through 2012. The average net addition to capital assets is 5.27% per year. The industry best practice is 4% to 6% of the system value. This is sign of a financial growth and an expanding system. Capital expenditures funds are shown in Figure 7.

2011	Additions	Deletions	2012	Net Additions
\$69,891,931	\$1,712,644	(95,443)	\$71,509,132	2.3%
2010	Additions	Deletions	2011	Net Additions
\$63,812,121	\$6,205,122	(125,312)	\$69,891,931	9.5%
2009	Additions	Deletions	2010	Net Additions
\$60,478,924	\$3,344,188	(10,991)	\$63,812,121	5.5%
2008	Additions	Deletions	2009	Net Additions
\$58,219,122	\$2,264,383	(4,581)	\$60,478,924	3.9%
2007	Additions	Deletions	2008	Net Additions
\$48,711,612	\$9,540,894	(33,384)	\$58,219,122	19.5%

Figure 7 - Capital Asset Additions and Deletions

FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

District staff prepared financial projections for years ending 2014 through 2021.

PROJECTED OPERATIONS

The revenues are projected to exceed the operating expenditures for all years as shown in Figure 8. The capital program expenditures are projected to be partially funded by reducing the fund balances. Using the benchmark goals of two to three months of fund balance, the projections show that the district will be able to maintain three months or more of fund balance through the year ending 2017 are shown in Figure 9.

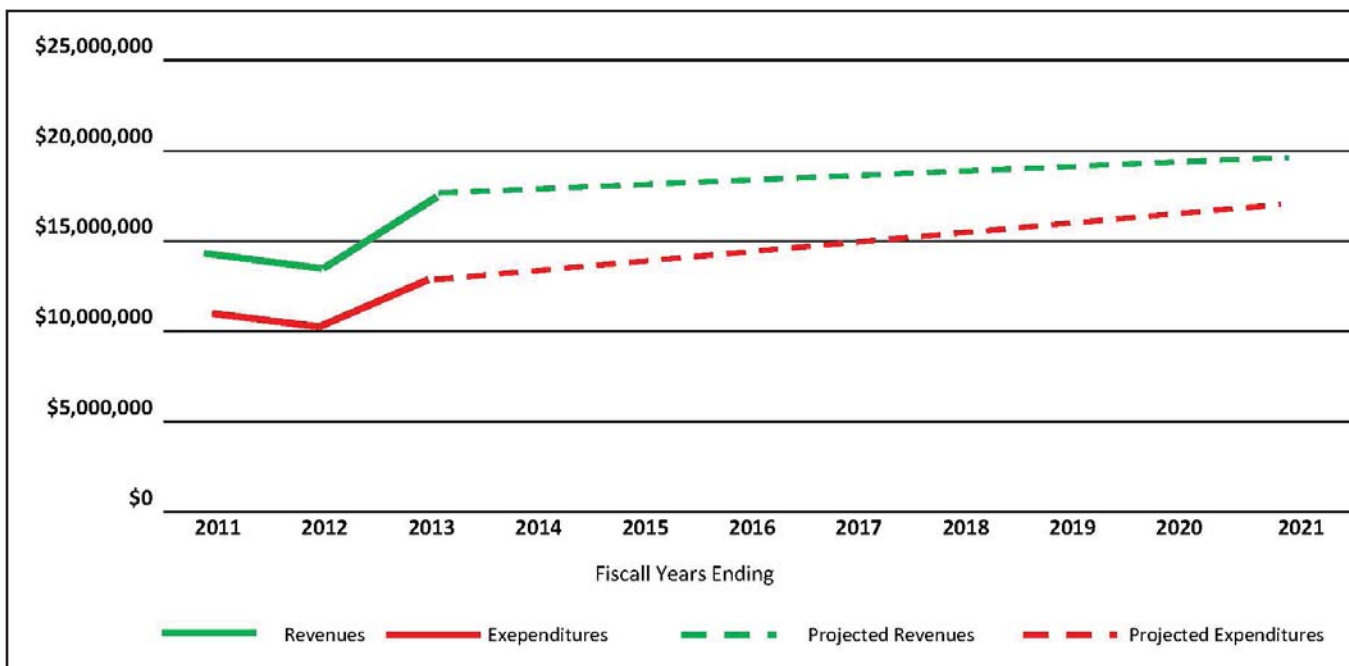


Figure 8 - Revenues and Operating Expenditures

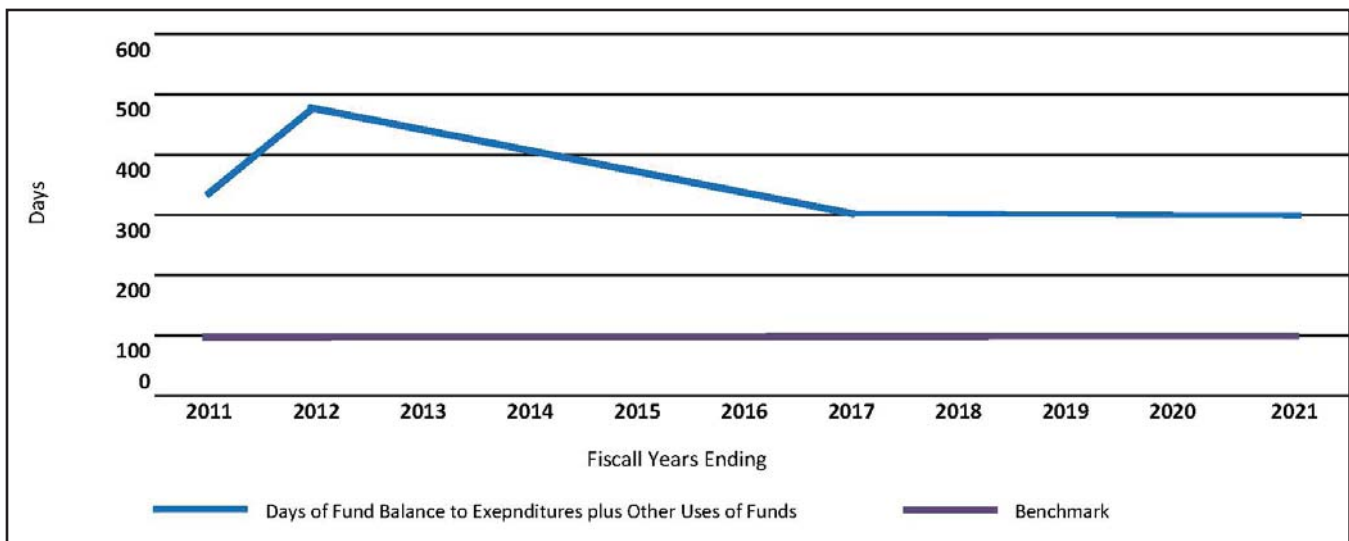


Figure 9 - Revenues and Operating Expenditures

As shown in Figure 10, the fund balance is projected to cover the following year expenditures for over six months. The General Fund is over nine months. The Education Fund has a projected two months of fund balance. The capital plan projects to spend all of the available funds for capital projects, resulting in Capital Construction and Land Acquisition Fund Balances to be near zero. The other funds are substantially over the benchmark goals.

PROJECTED 2014 FINANCIAL RESULTS

District staff prepared projected financial results for the year ending 2014. The financial results are shown in Figure 11 for fiscal year ending 2014.

The projected decrease in total fund balance is mostly used for Land Acquisition and Capital Construction. The General Fund covers more than General Fund expenditures.

The Education / Programming revenues are projected to cover 12% of the expenditures. The district's costs recovery goal for Education / Programming services is 15% and maybe be increased.

Fund:	General	Land Acquisition	Education / Programming	Capital Construction	Grant Funds	All Other Funds	TOTAL ALL FUNDS
Months of Fund Balance	9.1	0.0	2.0	0.2	0.0	171.3	6.9

Figure 10 - Months of Expenditure Coverage with 2014 Year End Projected Fund Balances

Fund	Estimated Revenues	Appropriations	Cost Recovery on Operations	Other Financing Sources	Other Financing Uses	Net Change in Fund Balance	Ext. Fund Balances of 1/1/2014	Est. Fund Balance as of 12/31/2014
General	\$17,272,519	(\$13,271,411)	130%	\$367,418	(\$8,625,000)	(\$4,256,473)	\$14,351,270	\$10,094,797
Land Acquisition	\$0	(\$5,758,670)	0%	\$3,405,000	\$0	(\$2,353,670)	\$2,353,670	\$0
Education / Programming	\$157,000	(\$1,294,611)	12%	\$825,000	\$0	(\$312,611)	\$523,275	\$210,664
Capital Construction	\$0	(\$6,372,500)	0%	\$4,395,000	\$0	(\$1,977,500)	\$2,100,770	\$128,270
Grant Funds	\$367,418	\$0	N/A	\$0	(\$367,418)	\$0	\$0	\$0
All Other Funds	\$187,180	(\$358,862)	52%	\$0	\$0	(\$171,681)	\$5,293,945	\$5,122,264
Total All Funds	\$17,984,117	(\$27,056,054)	66%	\$8,992,418	(\$8,992,418)	(\$9,071,936)	\$24,622,930	\$15,550,995

Figure 11 - 2014 Year End Projected Funds Balances

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Metroparks' board and staff have a fiduciary responsibility for managing the Parks and Recreation Funds. The financial management principles will form the basis for policy decisions affecting the park and recreation funds.

- The financial planning for the park district will be consistent with the goals and objectives of Metroparks and support the initiatives and strategies as reflected in board approved plans. Likewise, the agency's goals and objectives, which affect the park's operating funds, will be consistent with fund availability and financial projections.
- Metroparks will maintain an expenditure ratio of 65% of all available tax revenue for general operations and 35% available for capital repair, replacement or new development. This ratio does not apply to grants, donations or earned income.
- Metroparks will maintain a five-year capital improvement plan with a ten-year general financial projection. These will be updated annually and used as the basis for the development of budgets and revenue / fee schedules.
- The annual budget will be developed as an operational based budget, ensuring the highest possible accuracy of revenue projections and the review and evaluation of budget expenditure requirements. Annual budget plan submittals will meet all Finance Department budget development requirements. All efforts will be made to optimize productivity for improved service delivery at the lowest possible cost levels.
- The annual operating budget will project and produce a positive ending year cash balance. A cost recovery commitment for the budget-planning year will be developed and integrated into the financial management plan.
- Management of the park district's General Fund purposes will be detailed at the department level so cost / profit centers can be monitored throughout the year for tracking both revenue projections and expenditures. Where applicable, each cost center will be expected to meet revenue goals and keep expenditures to the lowest possible levels.
- The annual carry over balance and projected tax revenue will be maintained at a sufficient level to allow for yearly cash flow requirements and to provide for financing unforeseen needs of an emergency nature. The available cash of the carry over balance will be a minimum of six months of the approved annual general fund expenditure budget and will include an emergency contingency reserve of at least two percent of the approved annual expenditure budget of the general fund. The following year projected carry over balance shall be adjusted annually at the time the budget is adopted.
- Net revenue generated during the fiscal year, including donations, grants or other earned income above that needed to sustain the reserves will be committed as approved by the park district board.
- Funding priority will be given to the source of the funding stream, the repair and renovation requirements of the Metroparks facilities or for support of educational programs.
- All revenue producing facilities will develop an annual business plan.
- New or significantly renovated facilities will include financial cost projections for construction and operational impacts.
- All park district improvements and expenditures will be identified and approved by the board in the budget process.



FUNDING AND REVENUE STRATEGIES

This section identifies funding options to help support operational and capital cost. This is provided from PROS Consulting based on national work with other park systems.

REVENUE AND FUNDING OPTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR GREENWAYS AND TRAILS

Metroparks has enjoyed a remarkable success securing grant funding for land acquisition, park development, resource management, facility development and programming.

In addition the following areas maybe valuable considerations for alternative funding streams.

The greenway funding opportunities cited below are applicable to organizations and agencies throughout the U.S. that are seeking funding, including Metroparks. The most common method for funding greenways is to combine local, public sector, and private sector funds with funds from state, federal, and additional private-sector sources. Many communities involved with greenway implementation are choosing to leverage local money as a match for outside funding sources, in essence multiplying their resources.

Local advocates and district staff should pursue a variety of funding sources for land acquisition and greenway construction as well as funding opportunities for operations and maintenance costs. A greenway program that relies on limited funding sources may come to a grinding halt should these sources dry up. The following list of sources is divided into local and state funding sources that include:

Land Leases: Many communities across the United States have allowed land leases for commercial retail operations along trails as a source of funding. The communities that have used land leases look for retail operations that support the needs of recreation users of the trails. This includes coffee shops, grill and food concessions, small restaurants, ice cream shops, bicycle shops, farmers markets and small local business. The land leases provide revenue to maintain the trails and / or to be used for in-kind matching.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF Funds): The concept behind the tax increment financing is that taxes in a designated area are frozen and the redevelopment that occurs in the blighted, conservation, or economic development area will increase the assessed valuation of the property and generate new property tax revenues. The increase can be used on an annual basis to retire revenue bonds issued to finance redevelopment costs. A great deal of development is required to generate sufficient revenues to make it work.

Sale of Development Rights Below the Ground: Some public agencies have sold their development rights next to greenways below the ground for fiber optic lines and utility lines for gas and electric on a lineal foot basis. This has occurred in King County, Washington.

Special Recognition License Tag: In Indianapolis, Indiana, the Greenways Foundation has a special Greenways designation car tag that provides income to the Greenways Foundation to provide matching grant monies for the City of Indianapolis greenways program. The tag provides \$45 per tag sold back to the foundation.

Greenway Foundations: Greenway Foundations have been developing across the United States over the last 15 years to support greenway matching monies for cities and counties. Greenway Foundations raise money for capital monies and operational money.

Floodway Funding Sources: Many cities and counties have used floodway funding sources to support development and operations of greenways. This funding source is used extensively in Houston, Texas, and in Cleveland, Ohio.

Greenway Trust Fund: Another strategy used by several communities is the creation of a trust fund for land acquisition and facility development that is administered by a private greenway advocacy group, or by a local greenway commission. A trust fund can aid in the acquisition of large parcels of high-priority properties that may be lost if not acquired by private sector initiative. Money may be contributed to the trust fund from a variety of sources, including the municipal and county general funds, private grants, and gifts.

Greenway Fundraising Programs: Agencies across the United States have used greenways for not-for-profit fundraisers in the form of walks, runs, bicycle races, and special events. The local managing agency usually gets \$2-\$5 per participants in the events to go back to support the operations and maintenance costs.

Greenways Conservation Groups: Conservation groups adopt green corridors to support the operations and capital costs for specific greenway corridors. These groups raise needed money for designated greenways for capital and operations costs.

Local Private-Sector Funding: Local industries and private businesses may agree to provide support for greenway development through one or more of the following methods:

- Donations of cash to a specific greenway segment.
- Donations of services by large corporations to reduce the cost of greenway implementation, including equipment and labor to construct and install elements of a specific greenway.
- Reductions in the cost of materials purchased from local businesses that support greenway implementation and can supply essential products for facility development.

Adopt-A-Foot Program: These are typically small grant programs that fund new construction, repair / renovation, maps, trail brochures, facilities (bike racks, picnic areas, birding equipment) as well as provide maintenance support. The Adopt-A-Foot program is in the form of cash contributions that range from \$2,640 to \$26,400 over a five-year period.

State Departments of Transportation: Many states are the local administrators of federal funding from the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) – see more info below, under Federal Funding Sources.

Community Development Block Grants: Through its state CDBG Program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides states with annual direct grants, which they in turn award to smaller communities and rural areas for use in revitalizing neighborhoods, expanding affordable housing and economic opportunities, and / or improving community facilities and services.

Safe-Routes to Schools Program: The federal government provides safe-routes to school funding for greenways to promote youth walking to school. Grants are 100% federally funded.

State Water Management Funds: Funds established to protect or improve water quality could apply to a greenways / trails project if a strong link exists between the development of a greenway and the adjacent / nearby water quality. Possible uses of these funds include the purchase of critical strips of land along rivers and streams for protection, which could then also be used for greenways; develop educational materials, displays; or for storm water management.

VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE AND SMALL-SCALE DONATION PROGRAMS

Greenway Sponsors: A sponsorship program for greenway amenities allows for smaller donations to be received both from individuals and businesses. The program must be well planned and organized, with design standards and associated costs established for each amenity. Project elements that may be funded can include mile markers, call boxes, benches, trash receptacles, entry signage and bollards, and picnic areas.

Volunteer Work: Community volunteers may help with greenway construction, as well as conduct fundraisers. Organizations that might be mobilized for volunteer work include the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

Estate Donations: Wills, estates, and trusts may be also dedicated to the appropriate agency for use in developing and / or operating the greenway system.



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING SOURCES

Some federal programs offer financial aid for projects that aim to improve community infrastructure, transportation, and housing and recreation programs. Some of the federal programs that can be used to support the development of greenway systems include:

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21): The primary source of federal funding for greenways is through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). There are many sections of the act that support the development of bicycle and pedestrian transportation corridors.

Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG): The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers financial grants to communities for neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and improvements to community facilities and services, especially in low and moderate-income areas. Several communities have used HUD funds to develop greenways, including the Boscobel Heights' "Safe Walk" Greenway in Nashville, Tennessee.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Grants: This federal funding source was established in 1965 to provide "close-to-home" park and recreation opportunities to residents throughout the United States. Money for the fund comes from the sale or lease of nonrenewable resources, primarily federal offshore oil and gas leases and surplus federal land sales. LWCF grants can be used by communities to build a variety of parks and recreation facilities, including trails and greenways.

LWCF funds are annually distributed by the National Park Service to the states. Communities must match LWCF grants with 50-percent of the local project costs through in-kind services or cash. All projects funded by LWCF grants must be used exclusively for recreation purposes, in perpetuity.

Conservation Reserve Program: The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), through its Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, provides payments to farm owners and operators to place highly erodible or environmentally sensitive landscapes into a 10-15 year conservation contract. The participant, in return for annual payments during this period, agrees to implement a conservation plan approved by the local conservation district for converting sensitive lands to less intensive uses. Individuals, associations, corporations, estates, trusts, cities, counties and other entities are eligible for this program. Funds from this program can be used to fund the maintenance of open space and non-public-use greenways along bodies of water and ridgelines.

Wetlands Reserve Program: The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides direct payments to private landowners who agree to place sensitive wetlands under permanent easements. This program can be used to fund the protection of open space and greenways within riparian corridors.

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention (Small Watersheds) Grants: The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides funding to state and local agencies or nonprofit organizations authorized to carry out, maintain, and operate watershed improvements involving less than 250,000 acres. The NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to eligible projects to improve watershed protection, flood prevention, sedimentation control, public water-based fish and wildlife enhancements, and recreation planning. The NRCS requires a 50-percent local match for public recreation, and fish and wildlife projects.

Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program: The USDA provides small grants of up to \$10,000 to communities for the purchase of trees to plant along city streets and for greenways and parks. To qualify for this program, a community must pledge to develop a street-tree inventory, a municipal tree ordinance, a tree commission, committee or department, and an urban forestry-management plan.

Small Business Tree-Planting Program: The Small Business Administration provides small grants of up to \$10,000 to purchase trees for planting along streets and within parks or greenways. Grants are used to develop contracts with local businesses for the plantings.

Economic Development Grants for Public Works and Development of Facilities: The U. S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), provides grants to states, counties, and cities designated as redevelopment areas by EDA for public works projects that can include developing trails and greenway facilities. There is a 30-percent local match required, except in severely distressed areas where federal contribution can reach 80 percent.

National Recreational Trails Program: These grants are available to government and nonprofit agencies, for amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, for the building of a trail or piece of a trail. It is a reimbursement grant program (sponsor must fund 100% of the project up front) and requires a 20% local match. This is an annual program with an application deadline at the end of January. The available funds are split such that 30% goes toward motorized trails, 30% to non-motorized trails, and 40% is discretionary for trail construction.

Design Arts Program: The National Endowment for the Arts provides grants to states and local agencies, individuals and nonprofit organizations for projects that incorporate urban design, historic preservation, planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and other community improvement activities, including greenway development. Grants to organizations and agencies must be matched by a 50% local contribution. Agencies can receive up to \$50,000.

GRANTS THROUGH PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATIONS

Many communities have solicited greenway funding from a variety of private foundations and other conservation-minded benefactors. Some of these grants include:

American Greenways Eastman Kodak Awards: The Conservation Fund's American Greenways Program has teamed with the Eastman Kodak Corporation and the National Geographic Society to award small grants (\$250 to \$2000) to stimulate the planning, design, and development of greenways.

REI Environmental Grants: Recreational Equipment Incorporated awards grants to nonprofit organizations interested in protecting and enhancing natural resources for outdoor recreation. The company calls on its employees to nominate organizations for these grants, ranging from \$500 to \$8,000, which can be used for the following:

- Protect lands and waterways and make these resources accessible to more people.
- Better utilize or preserve natural resources for recreation.
- Increase access to outdoor activities.
- Encourage involvement in muscle-powered recreation.
- Promote safe participation in outdoor muscle-powered recreation, and proper care for outdoor resources.

Coors Pure Water 2000 Grants: Coors Brewing Company and its affiliated distributors provide funding and in-kind services to grassroots organizations that are working to solve local, regional and national water-related problems. Coors provides grants, ranging from a few hundred dollars to \$50,000, for projects such as river cleanups, aquatic habitat improvements, water quality monitoring, wetlands protection, pollution prevention, water education efforts, groundwater protection, water conservation and fisheries.

World Wildlife Fund Innovative Grants Program:

This organization awards small grants to local, regional and statewide nonprofit organizations to help implement innovative strategies for the conservation of natural resources. Grants are offered to support projects that accomplish one or more of the following: (1) conserve wetlands; (2) protect endangered species; (3) preserve migratory birds; (4) conserve coastal resources; and (5) establish and sustain protected natural areas, such as greenways.

Innovative grants can help pay for the administrative costs for projects including planning, technical assistance, legal and other costs to facilitate the acquisition of critical lands; retaining consultants and other experts; and preparing visual presentations and brochures or other conservation activities. The maximum award for a single grant is \$10,000.

Bikes Belong: Bikes Belong coalition is sponsored by members of the American Bicycle Industry. The grant program is a national discretionary program with a small budget, to help communities build TEA-21-funded projects. They like to fund high-profile projects and like regional coalitions. An application must be supported by the local bicycle dealers (letters of support should be attached). Bikes Belong also offers advice and information on how to get more people on bikes. Government and nonprofit agencies are eligible and no match is required. The maximum amount for a grant proposal is \$10,000. Applications may be submitted at any time and are reviewed as they are received.

Steelcase Foundation: Steelcase Foundation grants are restricted to locally sponsored projects in areas where there are Steelcase, Inc. manufacturing plants. In general, Steelcase does not wish to be the sole funder supporting a program. Grants are also only made to nonprofit organizations. It does support educational and environmental projects, and is particularly interested in helping the disadvantaged; disabled, young and elderly improve the quality of their lives. Applications may be submitted anytime and are considered by the Trustees four times a year.

Wal-Mart Foundation: This foundation supports local community and environmental activities and educational programs for children (among other things). An organization needs to work with the local store manager to discuss application. Wal-Mart Foundation only funds 501(c)3 organizations.

PARKS AND RECREATION FUNDING SOURCES THAT FUND OPERATIONAL AND CAPITAL COSTS

The following funding sources can provide revenue opportunities for the district, but it will take a dedicated staff person to investigate and pursue the source and manage for the future. The following are funding sources that can be developed for the city.

Redevelopment Money: Redevelopment money from the county or the state to promote economic development in the area. Redevelopment agencies are typically located as part of cities and counties in most states.

Bed Tax (transient occupancy tax): A Bed Tax (transient occupancy tax) money from hotels and motels in the city who would directly benefit from the attractions or special events held at the city park sites. Counties usually manage this funding source, which would require the county to support the funding source. This could be one or two percent added to the existing bed tax to support the development of a specific facility or park.

CDBG Money: This source can be used for a park site. The city does qualify for this funding source.

Local, Regional or National Foundations: Many communities have turned to their local, regional and national foundations in their area to support the development of an element of the park system.

Park Income Tax Issue: This would require local residents to vote on an income tax issue to develop or enhance existing and new parks from income taxes of residents and people who work in the area. Metroparks has successfully used this funding source.

Lease Back Option: The agency would enter into a lease back option with a private finance company to provide the financing for the project. The agency, along with their partners, would agree to pay the development costs back over a 30-year period from the revenues earned from the site or from general fund dollars dedicated to the project.

Partnership Development Agreement: Each partner would develop their respective facilities based on set design guidelines with the city managing all the site elements. Partners would work collectively to promote the site as a whole versus individual amenities. This process was successful for Papago

Park, located in the City of Phoenix, Arizona. The site included a major league spring training facility and minor league baseball complex, zoo, botanical gardens, history museum, and other attractions on site.

Naming Rights: Private fundraising could be developed to fund a portion or all of it through naming rights for a park site and through individual amenity naming rights. Naming rights are calculated by the number of impression points by visitors to the site. A park could raise 20%-30% of the development costs from naming rights. Individual naming rights could support the development of sports fields, a dog park, skate park, ice rink, BMX track, winter sports area, children's play area, hockey rink, and golf course.

Grants: Grants have always been a good source for funding of parks throughout the United States. Grants can be provided by the federal government such as the land and conservation fund, transportation enhancement funds for trails and greenways, state grant funds from gambling taxes or alcohol funds, and local grants from community foundations. Research for funding included, but is not limited to Federal / State Grants, Foundation Sources, and Corporate Grants for areas of support and fields of interest.

Community Forest and Open Space Program: Federal Grant with Estimated Total Program Funding of \$3,150,000. Individual grant applications may not exceed \$400,000. The program pays up to 50% of the project costs and requires a 50% non-federal match. Eligible lands for grants funded under this program are private forests that are at least five acres in size, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75% forested.

Land and Water Conservation Fund: Preserve, develop, and renovate outdoor recreation facilities. Focus is on America's Great Outdoors Initiative. New or renovation of pavilions, playgrounds or play areas, ball fields, bleachers, golf course meeting rooms, multi-purpose courts, parking facilities, pathways and trails, roads, signs, ski areas, snowmobile facilities, and tennis courts. Federal Funds-Average Award is \$70,000.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program-fund: This source is for transportation projects that improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion. Projects can include bicycle and pedestrian projects, trails, links to communities, bike rack facilities. Average grant size \$50-\$100,000.

Ohio Community Foundations: In this area are some very large community foundations that the city should pursue for elements of the park systems needs to support economic development for the area.

Community Facilities Grant and Loan Program-Grant Program: This source is established to assist communities with grant and loan funding for the expansion, renovation and or remodeling of former school facilities and or existing surplus government facilities that have an existing or future community use. Facilities may be space for community gatherings and functions, recreational athletic facilities for community members, particularly youth. These include space for non-for-profit offices, childcare, community education, theater, senior centers, youth centers, and after school programs. CFP match requirements for requests up to \$250,000 are 10% eligible project costs. For requests over \$250,000 to \$1 million, the match is 15%.

American Hiking Society: Fund on a national basis for promoting and protecting foot trails and the hiking experience.

The Helen R. Buck Foundation: This foundation provides funding for playground equipment and recreational activities.

Deupree Family Foundation: The Deupree Family Foundation provides grants for Recreation, parks / playgrounds, and children / youth, on a national basis. This foundation supports building / renovation, equipment, general / operating support, program development, and seed money.

The John P. Ellbogen Foundation: Children / youth services grants as well as support for capital campaigns, general / operating support, and program development.

Economic Development Grants for Public Works and Development of Facilities: The U. S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), provides grants to states, counties, and cities designated as redevelopment areas by EDA for public works projects that can include developing trails and greenway facilities. There is a 30% local match required, except in severely distressed areas where the federal contribution can reach 80%.

OPERATIONAL FUNDING COSTS OPPORTUNITIES

The district has numerous revenue sources to draw from to support operational and management costs that include long term capital replacement costs. The following are funding options to consider in operations of the system.

User Fees: User fees to access or use elements of parks exist currently but could be expanded to include fees to access recreation and education programs, a dog park, nature center, sport leagues, winter sports area, ice skating.

Concessions: Concessions can be leased out to a private operator for a percentage of gross profits. Typically, 15%-18% of gross profits for concessions of a profit operator, or a managing agency over a park site could manage concessions.

Parking Fees: During major special events, the park system could charge a \$5 parking fee for special events in the parks.

Field Permits: The district can issue recreational use permits for activities, practice or games. Permits should cover the operational cost of each field and management costs. If a private operator desires to rent the site for a sporting tournament for private gain, the district should provide a permit fee plus a percentage of gross from the event for the exclusive use of the fields.

Admission Fee: An admission fee to an event in the park can be utilized.

Walking and Running Event Fees: Event fees for walking and running events in the park can be assessed to cover safety staff managing the event in the park.



Lamb Center – reservable

Food and Equipment Sponsors: Official drink and food sponsors can be utilized for the district. Each official drink and food sponsor pays back to the district a set percentage of gross. Typically, this is 15%-20% of costs for being the official product and receiving exclusive pouring and food rights to the complex. Likewise official equipment sponsors work well for trucks, mowers, and tractors.

Advertising Revenue: Advertising revenue can come from the sale of ads on banners in the parks. The advertising could include trashcans, trail markers, visitor pull trailers, tee boxes, scorecards, and in restrooms.

Wi-Fi Revenue: The district can set up a Wi-Fi area whereby a Wi-Fi vendor is able to sell the advertising on the Wi-Fi access banner to local businesses targeting the users of the site. This revenue has amounted to \$20,000-\$50,000 in revenue for similar systems.

Cell Tower: Cell tower leases can be used. This revenue source would support \$35,000-\$50,000 annually for the site if cell towers in areas needing cell towers.

Program Fees: Program fees to support existing programs can be employed in the form of lessons, clinics, camps, life skill programs, and wellness and fitness. These types program help support the operations of the park and recreation system as a whole. Metroparks has done a good job in establishing program fees.

Special Event Sponsors: Special events provide a great venue for special events sponsors as it applies to a concert, stage, entertainment, and safety.

Capital Improvement Fee: A Capital Improvement Fee on all programs and events can be added. A capital asset fee of \$2-\$3 on each person who participates in a class, event, or program can be incorporated into the cost of the program or event.

Room Reservations: Rental of rooms in the park system can gain operational revenues from these amenities with a typical range of \$200-\$500 a day for exclusive rental reservations.

Volunteerism: The revenue source is an indirect revenue source in that persons donate time to the district to assist in providing a product or service on an hourly basis. This reduces the district's cost in providing the service plus it builds advocacy for the district.

Special Fundraiser: Many agencies hold special fundraisers on an annual basis to help cover specific programs and capital projects to be dedicated to a facility or district as a whole.

Catering: The district has many sites that set up well to have high, medium and low level caterers on contract that groups can use. Caterers usually provide the parks with a fixed gross rate on food and beverage at 12%-15% of the cost of food and 18% of drink back to the district.

CHAPTER 6 – ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

With the down turn of the economy in 2008, Metroparks began to make adjustments to staffing level to reduce operational overhead; consequently service levels were also reduced. The passage of the new .9 mill levy in 2012 afforded the agency to not only to begin to restore staffing levels to pre-recession level, but to do so in a manner that was reflective of changing or new programming opportunities and trends, anticipated facility growth, and the agency's administrative needs.

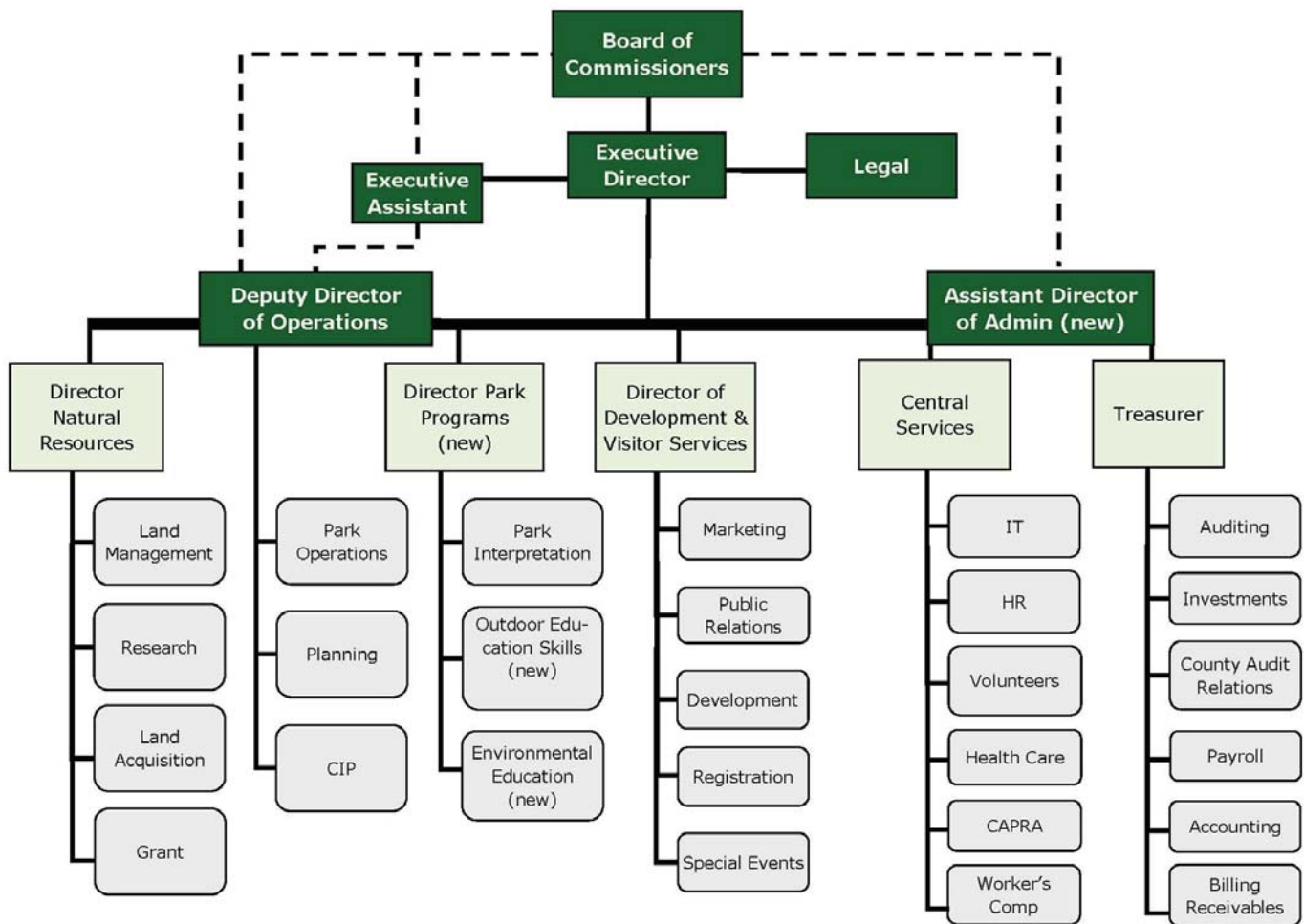
The administrative organizational chart was modified in 2013 to begin to provide succession stability by creating and filling a Deputy Director position. A conditional land acquisition position was reclassified to a permanent position, Director of Natural Resources. Two additional full time midlevel management positions were created and filled in the Finance Department to prepare for additional

work-load associated with organizational growth and increased capital improvements. An additional project manager was hired in the planning group, An Executive Assistant position was created and filled and several additional permanent part-time programming staff was hired.

The following functional administrative organizational structure is recommended for the district to consider implementing over the next two years. This organizational structure provides a foundation for growth. As the agency moves forward with additional programming initiatives, building new parks and facilities and developing regional trails there will be increased staffing needs. This structure allows for expanding field and programming staff, segregated administrative functions stability and succession.

Please refer to Appendix B for Core Competency findings and recommendations.

METROPARKS OF THE TOLEDO AREA ORGANIZATION 2014-15



CHAPTER 7 – IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



The following are key recommendations for each division within the District. These recommendations are not in order of magnitude.

LAND MANAGEMENT AND ACQUISITION

Our vision for land is to develop existing underutilized open space to provide additional public service and promote awareness on ecologically significant resources. Efforts should continue to connect regional parks with an open space corridors and integrated trail system for the purpose of enhancing and perpetuating ecological services, a sense of regional identity, neighborhood connectivity and promoting active life styles health and wellness.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Complete a network of open space corridors and trails in Lucas County that connect population centers to regional parks or reservations. The trails would ideally link with regional, national, and international trails systems, including the North Coast Inland Trail, and the North Country National Scenic Trail.
- Develop water trails or blue trails along the major regional streams linking existing and new parklands. This will serve a growing demand for recreation canoeing and kayaking.
- Connect existing stream side parks with access sites along Ottawa and Maumee Rivers, Tenmile Creek, Swan Creek, and where possible create connections to the Lake Erie Shoreline.
- Develop launch points with adequate parking to accommodate non-motorized recreation watercraft.
- Link parks existing linear green way trails to create regional loop trails.

- Develop view shed protection plans along the river and streams to perpetuate scenic views and user enjoyment and the character of existing parks.
- Continue partnerships in land management for Oak Openings with the Maumee State Forest, Toledo Airport Authority, local communities, and the Nature Conservancy.
- Develop The Middlegrounds in 2014-2015, Howard Farms by 2015-18, Battlefield Park by 2014-15, Chessie Trail by 2015-16, Belt Property by 2014-15, Keil Farms by 2017, Blue Creek Conservation Area by 2018, portions of Oak Openings by 2015-16, Manhattan Marsh by 2018, with an ongoing commitment to regional trail.
- Develop and implement a Natural Resource Management Plan for the entire district with an education outreach to promote and support this focus.
- Develop a controlled growth plan for related staffing needs with contingency for outside funding, partnerships or lack-there-of.
- Consider developing an Eco-tourism Plan with the Convention and Visitor Bureau to enhance existing eco-tourism opportunities that exist now.
- Acquire future park plans based on set criteria approved by the board of commissioners with an ongoing three year goals.
- Consider formalizing interagency land management plans for the Oak Openings region greenways and lakeshore.
- Create a video production of the work done by the Natural Resources Division to educate the community and district staff on the value of their work.

FACILITIES

Our vision for park facilities and amenities is to provide a wide-range of park related experiences for users of all ages to create lifetime users without over extending the system financially.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Incorporate design principles into the development of the parks with measurable outcomes, including designs to encourage active lifestyles and outdoor activities. User demand and expectations for programs and quality program experiences need to drive design.
- Design for at least four experiences for each of the 17 age segments that make up a person's life in each of the new park designs. Use these principles when updating existing parks to create stronger experiences and create destination parks. Efforts should be made to help spread user from Wildwood to other parks.
- Incorporate viable service partners in the design process for parks.
- Develop a true cost of service assessment for the operations and maintenance of the updated parks or new parks so proper operational funding for staff and equipment will occur. This needs to be done in the form of a park specific operational business plan.
- Incorporate adequate program space in the parks and buildings to create a good experience for users and staff.
- Create a virtual view of the park district's facilities before people rent them and post them on the website.
- Consider adding new amenities, such as single-track mountain bike trails, and outdoor adventure amenities to draw young adults to the parks.
- Evaluate demand for additional horse trails and other viable special interests.
- Incorporate maintenance and program staff in the design process to ensure that they have input into how the facilities will be as productive and efficient as possible.
- Develop technology into design of parks and facilities to include Wi-Fi and GIS access points.

PROGRAMMING

Our vision is to broaden program services to appeal to a wider age segment and offer opportunities for new experiences to increase the perception of the value of Metroparks to the community.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Incorporate consistent service and educational principles into all programs developed by Metroparks' staff.
- Categorize all programs as core essential, important, and value added.
- Consider broadening program offerings to include outdoor skills and recreation, senior recreation, wellness, special population recreation, adventure activities, and urban youth enrichment programs.
- Track national and regional trends for programs and services and how they may apply to Metroparks.
- Track lifecycle of all programs and terminate programs that are in the decline and saturation phase.
- Consider themed program series at introductory, skill development and expert levels.
- Expand year round programs expanding programs offered in late fall, winter and early spring to augment summer program levels.
- Develop a strategy to diversify program offerings across the system and away from Wildwood along with a supportive marketing plan.
- Continue to annually update policies for programs, such as pricing and partnership development.
- Develop a cost recovery plan for all programs that have a fee to fall into the important and value added classification. This needs to include a cost of service analysis to determine the level of tax subsidy each program and person receives.
- Commit to better staff training for part-time or seasonal employees before seasonal programs start.
- Enhance standards for programming, education, and interpretation through monitoring industry standards and trends.
- Self-driven visitor experiences need to be recognized as a program area. Greater use of technology needs to be incorporated into self-driven visitor experiences.
- An improved program plan for scheduling of sites, people, and level of services is needed.
- Incorporate stronger performance measures to identify key outcomes of programs toward promoting the value of the park system.
- Incorporate additional special events into the park system and at various regional parks.
- Incorporate a culture of quality management as outlined in the program section of the report.
- Incorporate more exposure and enhance cross marketing
- Train staff on how to effectively work with volunteers and conduct on an annual basis to improve the value the district can gain from their contribution between staff, volunteers and members.
- Ensure volunteer record keeping systems are coordinated so that it is easy to determine who is volunteering and where.
- Keep volunteers fully informed of district activities to gain support and advocacy from this important pool of agency representatives.
- Create opportunities to engage volunteers at higher performance levels with regards to specific projects, programs and project management.



PARTNERSHIPS

Our Vision for Partnerships is to build capacity and advocacy through effective partnerships that are financially equitable and provide the residents a higher level of services than Metroparks can provide alone. Metroparks has a tremendous number of partnership agreements. They need to be evaluated for relevance, common value and agency benefit.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- All partnerships will have a working agreement that is updated every two years with measurable outcomes. Yearly reporting to the park commissioners should occur.
- All partnerships will track costs to measure the investment made into the partnership to demonstrate the shared level of equity.
- All partnerships will incorporate a culture that focuses on regular collaborative planning, communications, and annual reporting.
- Develop a policy for public / public partnerships, public / not-for-profit partnerships and public / private partnerships.

PARK MAINTENANCE

Our vision for park maintenance is to provide clean, safe parks that are natural by design with maintenance that exceed the user's expectations and provides an enjoyable experience.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The maintenance staff will create a true cost of service to maintain parks, trails, and amenities to determine all unit costs. This will help to determine the level of productivity, efficiency, and management standards.
- Develop a maintenance management plan for the district to focus on standards, costs, and staff levels needed.
- Incorporate technology to a greater level into park operations.
- Consider going to an operational management system based on three regions versus site-based management to eliminate operational silos, encourage shared resources and efficiency and accommodate new park developments. Regional managers would oversee all services in the region with all divisions that provide services in that district would reporting coordinating with that manager.



- Maintenance staff needs to support volunteers in their operations. Staff training is required so staff can learn to appreciate and manage the value that volunteers bring to each park site.
- The staff in each park needs to know the budget they have to work with and then manage it with measurable outcomes.
- Set policies like standard opening and closing times need to be addressed.
- Consider a separate trail crew to build and maintain trails to move the implementation of trails along at a faster pace.
- Consider the development of a centralized park ranger headquarter space
- Contracting of services needs to be explored in locations in special use areas where maintenance requirements are outside normal park skill proficiencies.
- Consider reducing the number of ground tech levels from five to two.
- Evaluate the asset management plan to identify and track the lifecycle of park amenities.
- Evaluate the work order system for efficiency and ease of use.
- Incorporate improved utility alternatives to reduce the cost and increase the efficiency of utilities.
- An updated signage plan is needed in the parks to help guide users.

FINANCE

Metroparks is well positioned for positive revenue flows through 2022 provided the organization continues to maintain the public support they have historically enjoyed. Our vision for the agency's financial management is to provide well documented, accurate, and timely information for the board and staff. Financial operations will continue to meet or exceed all state of Ohio auditing and investment practices and follow requirements for effective financial management and reporting. Financial policies and procedures will be both efficient, easily understood and adhered to throughout the agency.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- In addition to annual independent financial audits, consider periodic performance or organizational audits within the areas of finances, investment, budget development, payroll, procurement and vendor services.
- Refine system-wide approach to developing the yearly operational budget involving key staff.
- Complete improvements toward purchasing and capital improvement system processes.
- Incorporate minority business inclusion process working with the African American Chamber of Commerce and other similar organizations.
- Develop a stronger full-time staff-training program to improve more effective use of existing systems.
- Help staff in the field to determine their true unit costs to produce a unit of service.
- Consider developing a business development office to help staff implement business principles in each division.
- Revise the multi-year forecast to reflect planned capital improvements. Develop a general operating long-term financial plan for the agency that is consistent with the goals and objectives of Metroparks and support the initiatives and strategies as reflected in district approved plans. Agency goals and objectives, which affect park-operating funds, need to be consistent with fund availability and financial projections.
- Maintain a five-year capital improvement plan for the park system with ten year financial projections for all areas of revenue and expense. This will be up-dated annually and used as the basis for the development of general fund operational budgets, land acquisition and special projects.
- Metroparks budget will be developed as an operational based budget, ensuring the highest possible accuracy of projected revenues and expense.
- Annual budget plan submittals will meet all of the finance department's requirements. All efforts will be made to understand expenditures and improve service delivery at the lowest possible costs.
- The annual operating budget will project and produce a positive cash balance for each fiscal year. Operational objectives will be developed to identify cost recovery opportunities and integrated for the yearly budget.
- Development and management of the agency budget will be maintained at a department level so that each program and function can be easily monitored for revenue attainment against projected expenditures. All departments will monitor the budget in order to keep expenditures to the lowest possible levels.
- A managed carry over balance will be maintained at a sufficient level to allow for yearly cash flow requirements and to provide for financing unforeseen emergency needs. Available cash will be approximately six months of the approved annual general fund budget. This will carry over balance will also include available funds for contingency or unforeseen emergencies of at least two percent of the approved annual general fund expenditure budget. The managed carry over balance will be reported within the annually adopted budget.
- Net revenue generated from the fiscal year, above that needed to sustain carry over balances, will be committed to the funding source or special allocations as approved by the park district board. Funding priority of the special allocations will be given to the repair and renovation requirements of the district's facilities or for support of programs.
- All revenue producing departments will develop an annual business plan projecting revenues and expenses.
- Design financial principles will include financial costs and operational impacts at a specific dollar amount for any redesign or a new design of a park.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND MARKETING OPERATIONS

Our vision for Administration and Marketing is to develop or refine systems, policies, and procedures that reduce bureaucracy, provide operational efficiency, stability and accountability. Administration will work to and attain the goals and objectives of the Board of Park Commissioners. This is a vision that affords future sustainability with adequate organizational structure to afford ongoing growth and allowing for administrative succession. We recognize how important it is to protect the current level of public support for Metroparks. It is essential that the image and brand of Metroparks be protected or enhanced.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review policies and procedures on an annual basis making recommendations to the board as needed for revision or change. Ensure that they create maximum flexibility for the staff in the field to do their work in a timely manner.
- Train staff on how to be a lead function or a support function in the work that they do.
- Develop a marketing and branding plan for the district.
- Update the district's website.
- Teach staff how to effectively use marketing data to make good decisions when programming their facilities and managing their park sites.
- Continue to improve system communication via the daily update and enhanced intranet. Establish a communication network posting results of performance outcomes on a monthly and quarterly basis.
- Update job descriptions and do a salary assessment every five years to ensure the district is meeting the pay level requirements to keep effective staff in place.
- Continue and refine the commitment for regular staff evaluations and supervisors to maximize everyone's capabilities. Hold staff accountable through effective performance measures that are reviewed biannually.
- Develop and implement an organizational structure that affords a leadership succession plan for the district for key positions in the system.
- Centralize administrative support functions where possible to improve business and administrative functions serving the staff and the public.
- Expand the understanding of customer service within the district's operational efforts to include such areas as a uniform signage plan, digital interpretive access, trail rankings and user capacity issues.
- Develop a continuous improvement model for core services.
- Work on collaboration between divisions to reduce silos through effective planning, which will improve trust and communication.
- Develop a technology plan for the district and update every three years.
- Track workload management to ensure that people are not overloaded while others are not managed to the same expectation.

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION



METROPARKS OF THE TOLEDO AREA COMPREHENSIVE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

In November of 2012, the citizens of Lucas County saw fit to pass a new .9 mill park district levy for the purpose of general operations, land acquisition, land development and capital improvements.

With the passage of this levy the park system was presented an opportunity to chart a course for the next two decades. This would include restoring lost services, reinvestment in capital improvements and major maintenance in the existing parks, resuming planning and completing development for several new park projects, initiate planning for park development on recent acquisitions and to continue essential land acquisition for future open space and greenways.

The park administration and the Board of Park Commissioners were also committed to working towards the creation of an operational plan that, barring any unforeseen circumstances, would preclude the need to ask voters for increased tax millage for the next two decades.

In 2013 Metroparks of the Toledo Area launched a comprehensive planning process to establish a long term 20 year vision for the park system. This effort involved creating an inventory of existing conditions and identifying opportunities and priorities for protecting high quality natural areas and streamways and to create open space corridors or trails to connect existing and new parks. This comprehensive planning would also include developing a collection of conceptual plans to guide the completion of new park developments over the next ten years and create a corresponding business and sustainability plan to insure the balance and stability of Metroparks over the next decade and beyond.

To fully maximize the potential of this multi-tiered approach, three separate consulting firms were selected based on their specific areas of expertise. Each consulting firm would create an independent plan representing one part of a three part comprehensive plan. Consequently the three firms worked together to coordinate their data collection and information evaluation.

AN INVENTORY OF OPPORTUNITIES AND A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

URS was challenged to create a 20-year future plan for the park system. This future plan would identify natural resource attributes and amenities of the park district and the county within the context of national, state and regional significance. The process would inventory opportunities to connect existing parks and open spaces to communities and population centers and to recommend preservation strategies for significant natural areas and greenway corridors. The plan would provide a framework to leverage collaborative conservation and marketing efforts, identifying relationships between natural features, existing parks and protected open spaces, population and development centers.

A BUSINESS PLAN FOR OPERATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND SERVICE

PROS was contracted to review existing park operations, develop fundamental principles for operational excellence and to create standards to insure a sustainable future for Metroparks. This included evaluation of long range financial planning, relationships between operational overhead and available capital improvement funds, service delivery, educational and recreational programs, marketing and communication. The resulting outcome would ensure a commitment to maintaining best management practices for all areas of park operations and would provide a basis for planning controlled park wide staff expansion as new parks, services and facilities come on line.

EMERGING PARKS

Metroparks of the Toledo Area has not opened a new park for several decades. As a result of a ten year land acquisition levy that ran from 2002 through 2012, a great deal of open space had been acquired however due to the economic recession of 2008 several planned new park development projects had stalled.

At the time this comprehensive planning process began in 2013 two major park projects were already moving forward, the Middlegrounds and Howard Farms. Both of these projects had significant grant funding and associated completion schedules.

MKSK was retained to review and evaluate existing preliminary plans for other non-developed parks, and to create conceptual plans for new parks in selected study areas.

Several of MKSK's project sites had a basic level of planning completed as represented by the National Park Service General Management Plan format. They included: Keil Farm, The Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis, Blue Creek Conservation Area, Swan Creek Corridor and Brookwood Center.

In addition the park system had acquired approximately 4,000 acres within the Oak Openings Open Space Corridor. None of this property had been formally evaluated for public accessibility or facility development. MKSK was challenged to create conceptual plans that would provide a suitable platform for additional planning and development work.

The resulting outcome would be essential in developing the park district's annual capital improvement budget and projected capital improvement roster for the next five to ten years.

The board of park commissioners and staff has developed an outstanding park system for the residents of Lucas County. The Toledo region has supported the district very well over the last 85 years. With the successful passage of the 2012 levy Metroparks has the opportunity and responsibility to resume planning for the future by developing three separate planning documents to help guide the organization for the next 20 years. Each planning document supports a preferred future for the district in the functional area it represents. The operational assessment and business sustainability report centers on how the organization operates and how it thinks on a daily basis. The recommendations outlined supports changes that the board of park commissioners, key leadership of the agency, and the staff (who directly delivers services) desires.

The information gathered in the report supports every functional division and the system as a whole. The recommendations follow accreditation guidelines for CAPRA as well as demonstrating best practices in the industry. The recommendations will not be easy to implement, but are necessary to move the organization forward in a positive and productive manner. Many of the recommendations will have never been tried before and the culture of the organization may resist them. However, if implemented, the organization will be stronger, more fluid and flexible. The results will create a better culture to work in. The challenge is before the board, administration and staff to implement this comprehensive plan in an effective, accountable and sustainable manner. Let the process begin!

APPENDIX A – DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION



DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The total population of Lucas County had a slight decrease of approximately 2.9% from 455,054 in 2000 to 441,815 in 2010. The current estimated population for 2012 is 439,195, and it is projected to fall to 432,521 in 2017, and total 419,294 by 2027.

According to the U.S. Census reports, the total number of households in the county has decreased by approximately 1.4%, from 182,847 in 2000 to 180,267 in 2010. The county is estimated to have 178,669 households in 2012, and is expected to grow to 174,022 households by 2027.

Lucas County's median household income (\$40,607) and per capita income (\$23,347) are well below both state and national averages.

Based on the 2010 Census, the population of Lucas County is a little younger (36.9 years) than the median age of the U.S. (37.2 years). Projections show that by 2027 the county will continue to age,

with the 55+ age group being the only age segment experiencing a growing trend, representing 33.4% of the total population.

The gender balance of the county's residents is slightly skewed toward females (51.5%), which represent 225,967 of the estimated 2012 population.

The estimated 2012 population of the county is primarily White Alone (73.81%), with the Black Alone (18.98%) group representing the largest minority. From 2000 to 2010, the county's racial composition was relatively unchanged, as the White Alone category dropped by just over 3.5%, and the Black Alone segment grew its representation by approximately 2%. Future projections show that by 2027 Lucas County will slowly become more diverse, but remains predominately White Alone (69.93%), while the Black Alone group will slowly grow to 21.1% of the total population.

METHODOLOGY

Demographic data used for this analysis was obtained from U.S. Census Bureau and from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), the largest research and development organization dedicated to Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and specializing in population projections and market trends. All data was acquired in July 2013 and reflects actual numbers as reported in the 2000 and 2010 Censuses, and estimates for 2012 and 2017 as obtained by ESRI. Straight-line linear regression was utilized for projected 2022 and 2027 demographics. The geographic boundary of Lucas County was utilized as the demographic analysis boundary shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 - Lucas County Boundaries

RACE AND ETHNICITY DEFINITIONS

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined as below. The 2010 Census data on race are not directly comparable with data from the 2000 Census and earlier censuses; caution must be used when interpreting changes in the racial composition of the U.S. population over time. The latest (Census 2010) definitions and nomenclature are used within this analysis.

American Indian: This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.



Asian: This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Black: This includes a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

White: This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Hispanic or Latino: This is an ethnic distinction, a subset of a race as defined by the Federal Government; this includes a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

POPULATION

Lucas County has witnessed a slow decline in recent years. From 2000 to 2010, the county's total population experienced a small decrease of 2.9% or an annual rate of decrease of nearly 3%. This is the opposite of national growth averages, which were just over 1% annually. Projecting ahead, the total population of the county is expected to continue to undergo a gradual decline over the next 15 years. Based on predictions through 2027, the county is expected to have approximately 419,294 residents living within 174,022 households.

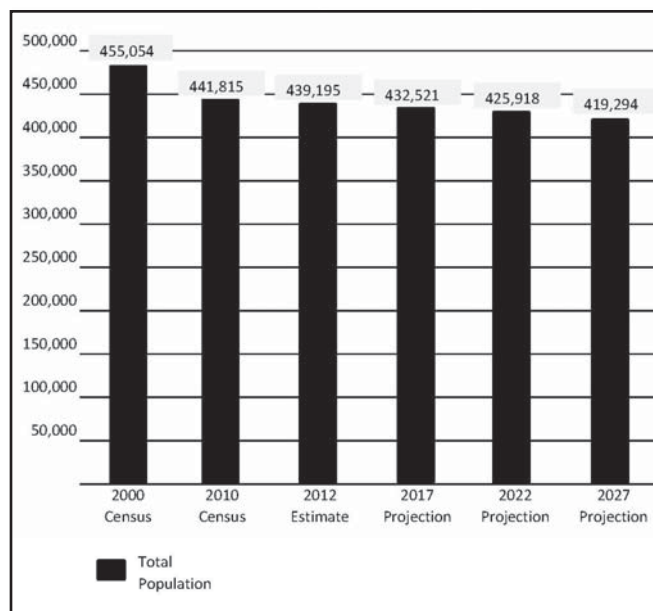


Figure 2 – Lucas County: Total Population

AGE SEGMENT

Evaluating the distribution by age segments, the county is fairly evenly balanced between youth, young adult, family, and senior populations. In 2010, the highest segment by population was the 35-54 age group, representing 27%, and the lowest is the 18-34 segment, which constitutes 23.6% of the population.

Over time, the overall composition of the population for the county is projected to gradually become older. The Census results from 2000 and 2010 show a slight increase in the 18-34 (from 21.1% to 23.6%) and 55+ (from 23% to 25.4%) segments. In the same 10-year period, the county experienced a small decrease in both the <18 (from 24.8% to 24%) and 35-54 (from 31.1% to 27%) populations. Future projections through 2027 show that each age segment, except the 55+ age group, will undergo

small but steady decreases in size as compared to the population as a whole. The 55+ age group is expected to gradually grow to represent approximately 33.4% of the population by 2027, making it the single largest age segment. This is consistent with general national trends where the 55+ age group has been growing as a result of increased life expectancies and the baby boomer population.

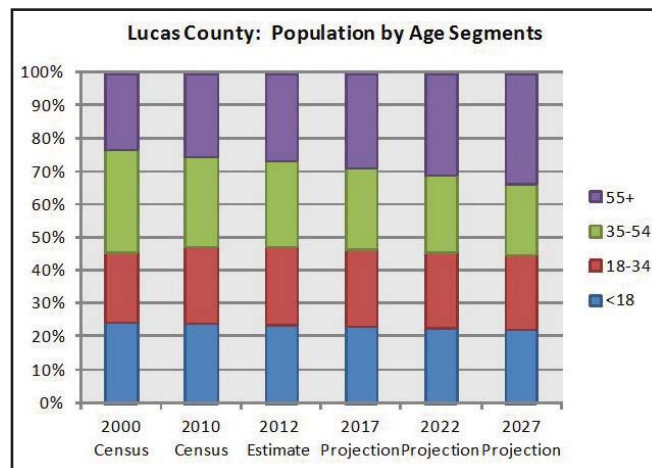


Figure 3 – Population Age by Segments

RACE AND ETHNICITY

In analyzing race and ethnicity, Lucas County is very limited in diversity. The 2012 estimate shows that the majority of the population falls in the White Only (73.81%) category. In the time between Censuses of 2000 and 2010, the county recognized very little diversification as the White Only category reduced slightly from 77.5% to 73.98%, while the Black Alone segment increased from 16.98% to 19%. Predictions for 2027 expect Lucas County to remain predominately White Alone (69.93%), while the Black Alone group expects to gradually grow to 21.1% of the total population. See Figure 4.

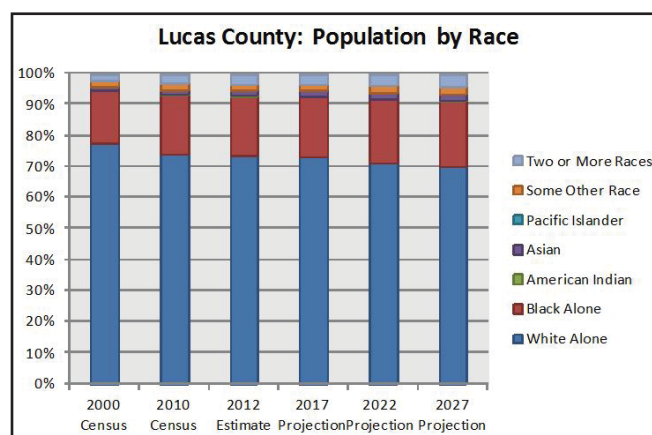


Figure 4 – Population by Race

HOUSEHOLDS AND INCOME

Lucas County’s income characteristics demonstrate steady growth trends. The median household income was \$38,078 in 2000 and \$40,607 in 2012. It is projected to grow to \$51,990 by 2027. The median household income represents the earnings of all persons age 16 years or older living together in a housing unit. The per capita income is also projected to increase from \$20,518 in 2000 and \$33,347 in 2012, to \$28,762 by 2027 (Figure 5).

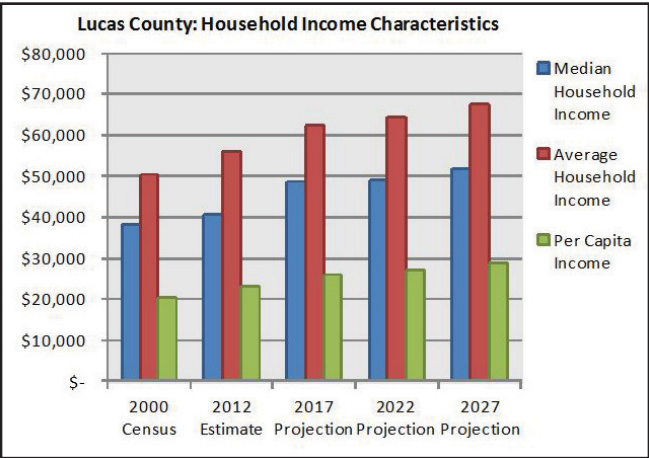


Figure 5 – Household Income Characteristics

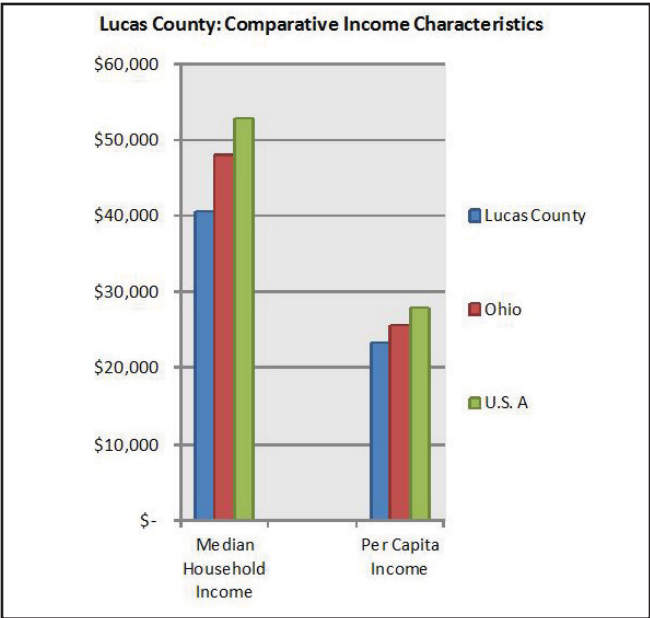


Figure 6 - Comparative Income Characteristics

As seen in Figure 6, the county’s median household income (\$40,607) is well above the state (\$48,071) and national (\$52,762) averages. Lucas County’s per capita income (\$23,347) is also significantly higher than state (\$25,618) and national (\$27,915) averages. Future predictions expect that both median household income and per capita income for the area will increase to \$51,990 and \$25,618, respectively, by 2027.

TRENDS ANALYSIS

Information released in the Outdoor Foundation’s Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013 reveal a record number of Americans (nearly 142 million people) participated in outdoor activities. The Outdoor Recreation Participation Report helps the outdoor industry, public agencies, and community organizations better understand the trends in outdoor recreation participation, enabling groups to address America’s inactivity crisis and the disconnect between children and the outdoors. During January and early February 2013 a total of 42,363 online interviews were carried out with a nationwide sample of individuals and households from the U.S. Online Panel operated by Synovate/ IPSOS. A total of 15,770 individual and 26,593 household surveys were completed. The total panel has over one million members and is maintained to be representative of the U.S. population.

Over sampling of ethnic groups took place to boost response from typically under-responding groups. A weighting technique was used to balance the data to reflect the total U.S. population aged six and above. The following variables were used: gender, age, income, household size, region, population density, and panel join date. The total population figure used was 287,138,000 people aged six and above. The report details participation among all Americans, youth, young adults, and adults. From these results, a current and accurate picture of outdoor recreation participation trends can be ascertained. Below are some of the key findings associated with this report.

NATIONAL OUTDOOR ACTIVITY TRENDS ANALYSIS

In 2012, Americans took advantage of the variety and accessibility of the nation's outdoor recreational opportunities. Last year, nearly half (49.4%) of the total population in the U.S. participated in some form of outdoor recreation. From 2011 to 2012, total participants of outdoor recreation increased by approximately 800,000 people, bringing the total to a record high of nearly 142 million people. The total number of outdoor outings in 2012 reached an all-time high of 12.4 billion excursions (up from 11.5 outdoor excursions in 2011). The report also showed that about one-fourth of outdoor enthusiasts participated in outdoor activities at least twice per week.

Walking for fitness was the overwhelming leader in overall participation, with approximately 116.7 million Americans (over 40% of the total population) engaging in the activity. Running/jogging was also very popular, with over 52 million participants, which

represents just over 18% of the total population. Based on 2012 data, the following chart depicts the top ten most popular outdoor recreation activities in terms of total participants. See Figure 7.

An interesting note for many public park and recreation agencies is that the largest areas of overall participation and growth in participation are in outdoor, nontraditional sports and activities. According to the Outdoor participation Report 2013, the most significant growth in participation among outdoor activities from 2011 to 2012 include adventure racing (up 103.76%), nontraditional, off-road triathlons (up 103.39%), and traditional triathlons (up 56.78%). The most rapid declines in outdoor activities from 2011 to 2012 were evident in snowmobiling (down 38.81%), snorkeling (down 14.03%), and jet skiing (down 10.79%). Analyzing trends over the last five years of data (2007-2012), we find participation in adventure racing grew the most with an increase of 210.89%, followed by nontraditional off-road triathlons (up 198.55%), traditional triathlons (up 173.68%), and telemarking (up 135.81%). In the same five-year span, the largest decreases in participation were in snowmobiling (down 40.22%), horseback riding (down 34%), and water skiing (down 24.77%). The following chart depicts participation figures (in thousands) and growth trends over the last five years for each outdoor activity based on results from the Outdoor Foundation's Outdoor Participation Report 2013.

Top Ten Outdoor Recreation Activities – All Persons Aged 6+		
Activity	% of Americans	Total Participants
Walking for Fitness	40.6%	116.7 Million
Running/Jogging	18.2%	52.2 Million
Bicycling (Road/Paved Surface)	13.7%	39.2 Million
Fishing (Freshwater/Other)	13.6%	39.1 Million
Camping (Car, Backyard, RV)	13.3%	38 Million
Hiking	12.0%	34.5 Million
Camping (Within ¼ Mile of Vehicle/Home)	10.4%	30 Million
Wildlife Viewing (>¼ Mile of Vehicle/Home)	8.0%	23 Million
Target Shooting (Handgun)	5.6%	16.1 Million
Hunting (All)	5.1%	14.7 Million

Figure 7 – Top Ten Outdoor and Recreation Activities

Averaging the year-to-year changes in participation for outdoor activities provides a stabilized indicator of how sports are trending over time. From 2009 to 2012, the largest average year-to-year changes in activities were in nontraditional off-road triathlons

(average increase of 40%), adventure racing (average increase of 35%), and traditional triathlons (average increase of 30%). Figure 9 displays the top ten outdoor activities in terms of average year-to-year change in participation.

National Participatory Trends; by Activity - Outdoor Recreation	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	% Change '11-12	% Change '10-12	% Change '09-12	% Change '08-12	% Change '07-12
Adventure Racing	698	920	1,089	1,339	1,065	2,170	103.76%	62.06%	99.27%	135.87%	210.89%
Archery	5,950	6,409	6,326	6,319	6,623	7,722	16.59%	22.20%	22.07%	20.49%	29.78%
Backpacking (Overnight)	6,637	7,867	7,647	8,349	7,095	8,771	23.62%	5.05%	14.70%	11.49%	32.15%
Bicycling (BMX)	1,887	1,904	1,811	2,369	1,547	2,175	40.59%	-8.19%	20.10%	14.23%	15.26%
Bicycling (Mountain/Non-Paved Surface)	6,892	7,592	7,142	7,161	6,816	7,714	13.17%	7.72%	8.01%	1.61%	11.93%
Bicycling (Road/Paved Surface)	38,940	38,114	40,140	39,320	40,348	39,232	-2.77%	-0.22%	-2.26%	2.93%	0.75%
Birdwatching (>1/4 Mile From Vehicle/Home)	13,467	14,399	13,294	13,339	12,794	14,275	11.58%	7.02%	7.38%	-0.86%	6.00%
Boardsailing/Windsurfing	1,118	1,307	1,128	1,617	1,151	1,593	38.40%	-1.48%	41.22%	21.88%	42.49%
Camping (Within 1/4 Mile of Vehicle/Home)	31,375	33,686	34,338	30,996	32,925	29,982	-8.94%	-3.27%	-12.69%	-11.00%	-4.44%
Camping (Car, Backyard, RV)	39,836	42,396	44,034	39,909	42,548	38,049	-10.57%	-4.66%	-13.59%	-10.25%	-4.49%
Canoeing	9,797	9,935	10,058	10,553	9,787	9,839	0.53%	-6.77%	-2.18%	-0.97%	0.43%
Climbing (Sport/Indoor/Boulder)	4,514	4,769	4,313	4,770	4,119	4,592	11.48%	-3.73%	6.47%	-3.71%	1.73%
Climbing (Traditional/Ice/Mountaineering)	2,084	2,288	1,835	2,198	1,609	2,189	36.05%	-0.41%	19.29%	-4.33%	5.04%
Fishing (Fly)	5,756	5,941	5,568	5,478	5,683	6,012	5.79%	9.75%	7.97%	1.20%	4.45%
Fishing (Freshwater/Other)	43,859	40,331	40,961	38,860	38,868	39,135	0.69%	0.71%	-4.46%	-2.97%	-10.77%
Hiking	29,965	32,511	32,572	32,496	34,492	34,545	0.15%	6.31%	6.06%	6.26%	15.28%
Horseback Riding	12,098	10,816	9,755	9,809	8,861	7,985	-9.89%	-18.60%	-18.14%	-26.17%	-34.00%
Hunting (All)	14,138	13,980	15,273	14,007	14,887	14,705	-1.22%	4.98%	-3.72%	5.19%	4.01%
Jet Skiing	8,055	7,815	7,724	7,753	7,395	6,597	-10.79%	-14.91%	-14.59%	-15.59%	-18.10%
Kayaking (Recreational)	5,070	6,240	6,212	6,465	8,229	8,144	-1.03%	25.97%	31.10%	30.51%	60.63%
Kayaking (Sea/Touring)	1,485	1,780	1,771	2,144	2,029	2,446	20.55%	14.09%	38.11%	37.42%	64.71%
Rafting	4,340	4,651	4,318	4,460	3,821	3,690	-3.43%	-17.26%	-14.54%	-20.66%	-14.98%
Running/Jogging	41,064	41,130	43,892	49,408	50,713	52,187	2.91%	5.62%	18.90%	26.88%	27.09%
Sailing	3,786	4,226	4,342	3,869	3,725	3,958	6.26%	2.30%	-8.84%	-6.34%	4.54%
Scuba Diving	2,965	3,216	2,723	3,153	2,579	2,982	15.63%	-5.42%	9.51%	-7.28%	0.57%
Shooting (Sport/Clays)	4,115	4,282	4,182	4,399	4,193	4,896	16.77%	11.30%	17.07%	14.34%	18.98%
Shooting (Trap/Skeet)	3,376	3,669	3,368	3,610	3,295	3,886	17.94%	7.65%	15.38%	5.91%	15.11%
Skiing (Cross-Country)	3,530	3,848	4,157	4,530	3,641	3,307	-9.17%	-27.00%	-20.45%	-14.06%	-6.32%
Snorkeling	9,294	10,296	9,358	9,305	9,318	8,011	-14.03%	-13.91%	-14.39%	-22.19%	-13.80%
Snowmobiling	4,811	4,660	4,798	5,116	4,700	2,876	-38.81%	-43.76%	-40.06%	-38.28%	-40.22%
Snowshoeing	2,400	2,922	3,431	3,823	4,111	4,029	-1.99%	5.39%	17.43%	37.89%	67.88%
Stand Up Paddling	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,050	1,242	1,542	24.15%	46.86%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Target Shooting (Handgun)	11,736	13,365	12,473	12,497	14,778	16,059	8.67%	28.50%	28.75%	20.16%	36.84%
Target Shooting (Rifle)	12,436	13,102	12,730	12,544	13,520	14,186	4.93%	13.09%	11.44%	8.27%	14.07%
Telemarking (Downhill)	1,173	1,435	1,482	1,821	2,099	2,766	31.78%	51.89%	86.64%	92.75%	135.81%
Trail Running	4,216	4,857	4,833	5,136	5,610	6,003	7.01%	16.88%	24.21%	23.59%	42.39%
Triathlon (Non-Traditional/Off-Road)	483	602	666	929	709	1,442	103.39%	55.22%	116.52%	139.53%	198.55%
Triathlon (Traditional/Road)	798	1,087	1,208	1,978	1,393	2,184	56.78%	10.41%	80.79%	100.92%	173.68%
Wakeboarding	3,521	3,544	3,577	3,645	3,389	3,348	-1.21%	-8.15%	-6.40%	-5.53%	-4.91%
Walking for Fitness	108,740	111,668	110,095	114,068	111,362	116,695	4.79%	2.30%	5.99%	4.50%	7.32%
Water Skiing	5,918	5,593	4,862	4,836	4,416	4,452	0.82%	-7.94%	-8.43%	-20.40%	-24.77%
Wildlife Viewing (>1/4 Mile of Home/Vehicle)	22,974	24,113	21,291	21,025	21,964	22,999	4.71%	9.39%	8.02%	-4.62%	0.11%

NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over

Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)
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Figure 8 – National Participatory Trends

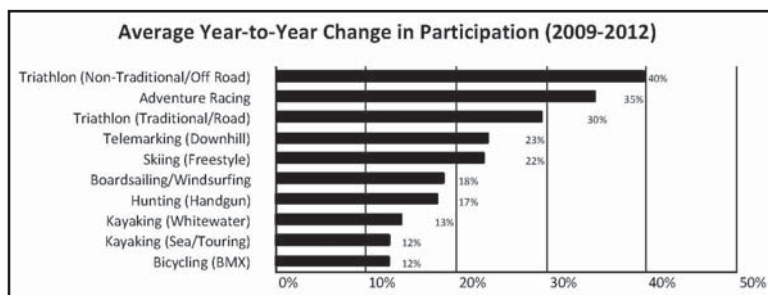


Figure 9 - Average Year to Year Change in Participation

PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES BY AGE AND GENDER

Participation trends in outdoor recreation, team sports, and indoor fitness activities vary based on age and gender. Outdoor activities are popular among children, especially boys ages 11 to 15. Participation rates in outdoor activities drop for both genders from ages 16 to 20. These rates slightly increase for females in their early 20's and males in their late 20's before gradually declining throughout life. For women age 16 to 20, indoor fitness is the preferred activity and remains the most popular form of activity for the rest of the lifecycle. Males tend to favor outdoor activities until age 66 and older.

The graphs below detail the lifecycle participation in recreational pursuits in both female and male participants, as identified in the Outdoor Industry Foundation's 2013 Outdoor Participation Report. These trends can help to determine which areas of focus and categories of recreational activities are going to appeal best to different age segments by gender among residents of Lucas County.

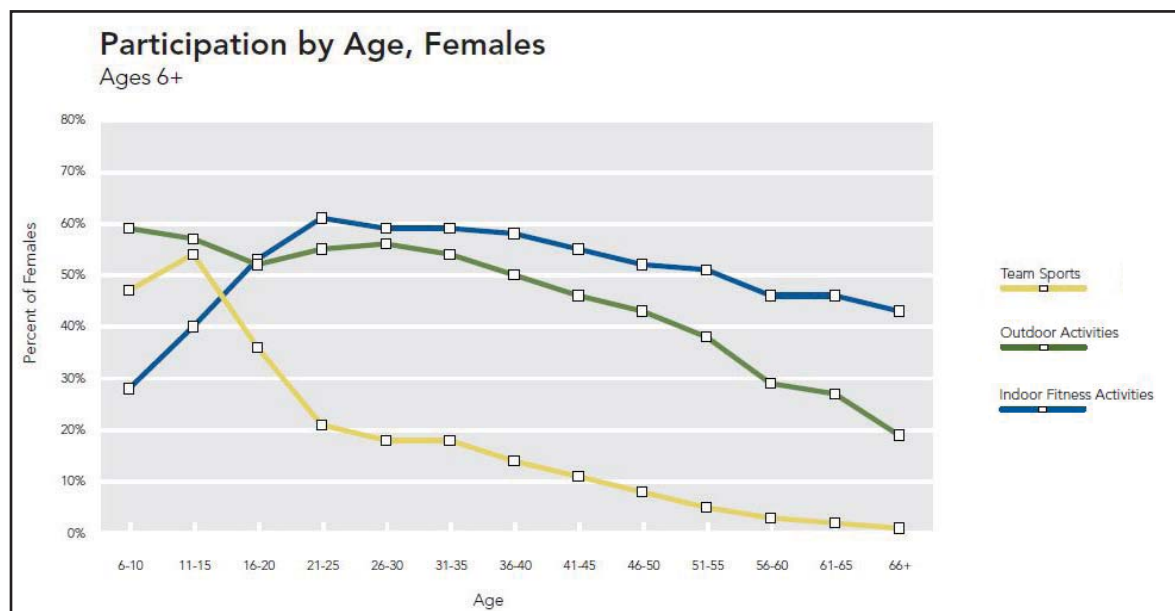


Figure 10 – Participation by Age, Females

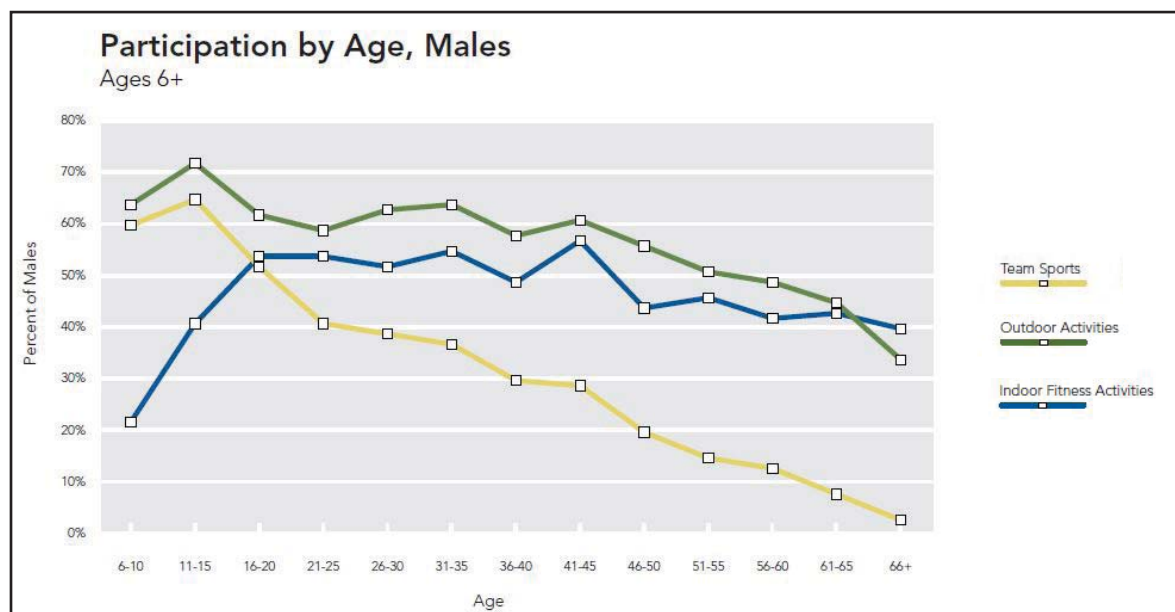


Figure 11 – Participation by Age, Males

LOCAL SPORT AND MARKET POTENTIAL

The following charts show sport and leisure market potential data from ESRI. A Market Potential Data (MPI) measures the probable demand for a product or service in Lucas County. The MPI shows the likelihood that an adult resident of the target area will participate in certain activities when compared to the U.S. National average. The national average is 100, therefore numbers below 100 represent a lower than average participation rate and numbers above 100 represent higher than average participation rate. The county is compared to the national average in two (2) categories – outdoor activity and money spent on miscellaneous recreation. Overall, Lucas County shows low market potential index numbers for both categories.

As seen in the tables below, the following sport and leisure trends are most prevalent for residents within Lucas County. Cells highlighted in yellow indicate the top three scoring activities based on the purchasing preferences of residents.

Participatory Trends; by Activity - Outdoor Activity	Lucas County (MPI)
Participated in Archery	120
Participated in Backpacking/Hiking	88
Participated in Bicycling (mountain)	98
Participated in Bicycling (road)	92
Participated in Boating (Power)	96
Participated in Canoeing/Kayaking	99
Participated in Fishing (fresh water)	105
Participated in Fishing (salt water)	90
Participated in Horseback Riding	99
Participated in Hunting with Rifle	101
Participated in Hunting with Shotgun	110
Participated in Jogging/Running	84
Participated in Target Shooting	100

Figure 12 - Outdoor Activity Market Potential

Participatory Trends; by Activity - Money Spent on Miscellaneous Recreation	Lucas County (MPI)
Spent on High End Sports/Recreation Equipment <\$250	101
Spent on High End Sports/Recreation Equipment >\$250	100
Attend sports event: baseball game	95
Attend sports event: basketball game (college)	101
Attend sports event: basketball game (pro)	97
Attend sports event: football game (college)	101
Attend sports event: football-Monday night game (pro)	98
Attend sports event: football-weekend game (pro)	95
Attend sports event: golf tournament	98
Attend sports event: ice hockey game	99
Attend sports event: soccer game	93
Visited a theme park in last 12 months	90
Visited Disney World (FL)/12 mo: Magic Kingdom	92
Visited any Sea World in last 12 months	81
Visited any Six Flags in last 12 months	81
Went to zoo in last 12 months	99

Figure 13 - Money Spent On Miscellaneous Recreation

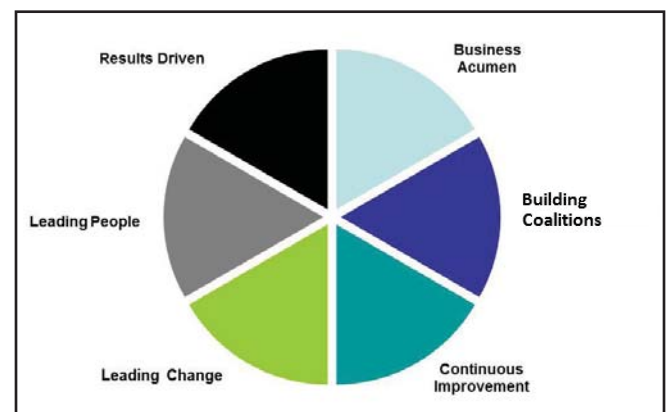
APPENDIX B – CORE COMPETENCY



CULTURAL ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMPETENCY DEFINITIONS

The following are the categories of core competencies with an overall description and skills definitions that contribute to each core competency. The Rating Scale provides a numerical value and skill set description to allow each individual the opportunity to assess Importance, Frequency and a Self- Evaluation. The Worksheet allows Specific Competency values to be recorded.



CORE COMPETENCY “BUSINESS ACUMEN”

This core qualification involves the ability to acquire and administer human, financial, material, and information resources in a manner that instills public trust and accomplishes the organization’s mission, and the ability to use new technology to enhance decision-making.

Specific Competencies:

Financial Management - Demonstrates broad understanding of principles of financial management and marketing expertise necessary to ensure appropriate funding levels. Prepares, justifies, and/or administers the budget for the program area; uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities; monitors expenditures in support of programs and policies. Identifies cost-effective approaches. Manages procurement and contracting.

Human Resources Management - Assesses current and future staffing needs based on organizational goals, strategic plan and budget realities. Using merit principles, ensures staff are appropriately selected, developed, utilized, appraised, and rewarded; takes corrective action.

Technology Management - Uses efficient and cost-effective approaches to integrate technology into the workplace and improve program effectiveness. Develops strategies using new technology to enhance decision-making. Understands the impact of technological changes on the organization.

CORE COMPETENCY “BUILDING COALITIONS / COMMUNICATIONS”

This core qualification involves the ability to explain, advocate, and express facts and ideas in a convincing manner and to negotiate with individuals and groups internally and externally. It also involves the ability to develop an expansive professional network with other organizations and to identify the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization.

Specific Competencies:

Citizen Participation – Recognizes the right of citizens to influence local decisions and promoting active citizen involvement in local governance; guides citizen participation in public meetings to ensure professional and respectful dialogue.

Influencing/Negotiating - Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals; facilitates “win-win” solutions.

Interpersonal Communication - Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of different people in different situations; is tactful, compassionate and sensitive, and treats others with respect.

Oral Communication - Makes clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals or groups; listens effectively and clarifies information as needed; facilitates an open exchange of ideas and fosters an atmosphere of open communication.

Partnering - Develops networks and builds alliances, engages in cross-functional activities; collaborates across boundaries, and finds common ground with a widening range of stakeholders. Utilizes contacts to build and strengthen internal and external support bases.

Political Savvy - Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Approaches each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality; recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action.

Written Communication - Expresses facts and ideas in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner appropriate for the intended audience.

CORE COMPETENCY “CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT”

This core qualification encompasses the ability to develop and implement an organizational vision that integrates key city goals, priorities, values, and other factors. It also involves the ability to continually strive to improve customer service and program performance within local government framework; to create a work environment that encourages creative thinking; and to maintain focus, intensity and persistence, even under adversity.

Specific Competencies:

Continual Learning - Grasps the essence of new information; masters new technical and business knowledge; recognizes own strengths and weaknesses; pursues self-development; seeks feedback from others and opportunities to master new knowledge.

Creativity and Innovation - Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements; creates a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation; designs and implements new or cutting-edge programs/processes.

External Awareness - Identifies and keeps up to date on key local, regional, state, and national policies and economic, political, and social trends that affect the organization. Understands near-term and long-range plans and determines how best to be positioned to achieve a competitive business advantage in a global economy.

Vision - Takes a long-term view and acts as a catalyst for organizational change; builds a shared vision with others. Influences others to translate vision into action.

CORE COMPETENCY “LEADING CHANGE”

This core qualification focuses on the ability to balance change and maintain continuity in an ever-changing environment. Inherent in its foundation is the ability to recognize the potential within the workforce and adapt outcomes through the enhancement of individual's strengths.

Specific Competencies:

Flexibility - Is open to change and new information; adapts behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. Adjusts rapidly to new situations warranting attention and resolution.

Change Agent – Leads change implementation. Fosters and supports an atmosphere that supports and embraces organizational change.

Resilience - Deals effectively with pressure; maintains focus and intensity and remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks.

Strategic Thinking - Formulates effective strategies consistent with the business and competitive strategy of the organization in a global economy. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long-term perspective. Determines objectives and sets priorities; anticipates potential threats or opportunities.

CORE COMPETENCY “LEADING PEOPLE”

This core qualification involves the ability to design and implement strategies that maximize employee potential and foster high ethical standards in meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals.

Specific Competencies:

Coaches/Mentors – Providing direction, support, and feedback to enable others to meet their full potential (requires knowledge of feedback techniques; ability to assess performance and identify others' development needs).

Conflict Management - Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impacts.

Empowerment – Creating a work environment that grants authority, removes barriers to creativity and encourages responsibility and decision making at all organizational levels.

Leveraging Diversity - Recruits, develops, and retains a diverse high quality workforce. Leads and manages an inclusive workplace that maximizes the talents of each person to achieve sound business results. Respects, understands, values and seeks out individual differences to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Develops and uses measures and rewards to hold self & others accountable for achieving results that embody the principles of diversity.

Integrity/Honesty/Ethics - Instills mutual trust and confidence; creates a culture that fosters high standards of ethics; behaves in a fair and ethical manner toward others, and demonstrates a sense of corporate responsibility and commitment to public service.

Team Building - Inspires, motivates, and guides others toward goal accomplishments. Consistently develops and sustains cooperative working relationships. Encourages and facilitates cooperation within the organization and with customer groups; fosters commitment, team spirit, pride, trust.

CORE COMPETENCY “RESULTS DRIVEN”

This core qualification stresses accountability and continuous improvement. It includes the ability to make timely and effective decisions and produce results through strategic planning and the implementation and evaluation of programs and policies.

Specific Competencies:

Accountability - Assures that effective controls are developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities and can be relied upon to ensure that projects within areas of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans; focuses on results and measuring attainment of outcomes. Assures that the future needs of the organization will be met and establishes timetables completing current and future projects.

Customer Service - Balancing interests of a variety of citizens; readily readjusts priorities to respond to pressing and changing citizen demands. Anticipates and meets the need of citizens; achieves quality end products; is committed to continuous improvement of services. Creates and sustains an organizational culture which encourages others to provide the highest quality of service for the public.

Decisiveness - Exercises good judgment by making sound and well-informed decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; makes effective and timely decisions, even when data is limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; is proactive and achievement oriented.

Entrepreneurship - Identifies opportunities to develop and market new products and services within or outside of the organization. Is willing to take risks; initiates actions that involve a deliberate risk to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage.

Problem Solving - Identifies and analyzes problems; distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions; provides solutions to individual and organizational problems.

Quality Assurance – Ensures a high level of quality staff work, operational procedures, and service delivery; leads organizational improvements; sets performance/productivity standards and objectives; measures results.

Technical Credibility - Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise. Is able to make sound hiring and capital resource decisions and to address training and development needs. Understands linkages between administrative competencies and mission needs.

COMPETENCY RATING SCALE

The Consulting Team evaluated six areas. This included the following:

- Business Acumen
- Building Coalitions
- Continuous Improvement
- Leading Change
- Leading People
- Results Driven
- The Department is doing well in the following areas:
 - Written communication
 - Partnering
 - Integrity, honesty, ethics
 - Empowerment
 - Accountability
 - Customer service
 - Problem solving
 - Areas that need more awareness:
 - Financial management
 - Human resource management
 - Citizens participation
 - Visioning
 - Coaching and mentoring of staff

Importance	Frequency	Self-Evaluation
How important is the performance of this competency?	How often is this task performed?	How would you rate your own competence and confidence with this core competency?
1-2 = Not Important	1-2 = Every few months to yearly	1-2 = Not Proficient/Competent
3-4 = Somewhat Important	3-4 = Every few weeks to monthly	3-4 = Somewhat Proficient/Competent
5-6 = Important	5-6 = Every few days to weekly	5-6 = Adequately Proficient/Competent
7-8 = Very Important	7-8 = Every few hours to daily	7-8 = Very Proficient/Competent
9-10 = Extremely Important	9-10 = Hourly to many times each hour	9-10 = Expertly Proficient/Competent

CORE COMPETENCY	IMPORTANCE	FREQUENCY	SELF EVALUATION
Business Acumen			
Financial Management	8.73	6.29	6.73
Human Resources Management	8.13	4.43	6.47
Technology Management	7.40	5.57	6.73
Building Coalition/Communications			
Citizen Participation	8.27	4.57	6.60
Influencing/Negotiations	7.93	5.36	7.20
Interpersonal Communication	8.67	7.07	7.33
Oral Communication	8.47	6.57	7.33
Partnering	7.73	4.93	6.73
Political Savvy	7.80	5.29	6.27
Written Communication	8.73	7.79	8.20
Continuous Improvement			
Continual Learning	8.60	4.79	7.27
Creativity and Innovation	8.20	4.93	7.00
External Awareness	7.67	5.14	6.27
Vision	8.33	4.71	6.60
Leading Change			
Flexibility	8.67	6.07	7.40
Change Agent	8.47	5.14	6.93
Resilience	8.40	6.57	7.27
Strategic Thinking	8.33	4.57	6.60
Leading People			
Coaches/Mentors	8.07	5.71	6.60
Conflict Management	8.00	4.86	6.67
Empowerment	8.33	5.50	7.20
Leveraging Diversity	8.13	4.79	7.20
Integrity/Honest/Ethics	9.47	8.00	8.53
Team Building	8.40	6.29	7.27
Results Driven			
Accountability	8.80	7.07	7.87
Customer Service	9.27	7.64	8.07
Decisiveness	8.73	7.50	7.07
Entrepreneurship	7.47	4.57	6.33
Problem Solving	9.00	7.50	8.07
Quality Assurance	8.67	6.79	7.73
Technical Credibility	8.20	6.71	7.33



METROPARKS OF THE TOLEDO AREA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
HOWARD FARMS	3
THE MIDDLEGROUNDS.....	5
BLUE CREEK METROPARK.....	7
BROOKWOOD	15
FALLEN TIMBERS BATTLEFIELD	19
FORT MIAMIS.....	23
FUTURE METROPARK (FORMERLY KEIL FARM).....	27
OAK OPENINGS CORRIDOR	31
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	37

INTRODUCTION



In November of 2012, the citizens of Lucas County saw fit to pass a ten-year, 0.9 mill park district levy for the purpose of general operations, land acquisition, land development and capital improvements.

With the passage of this levy, the park system was presented an opportunity to chart an operational course for the next two decades. This will include the restoration of public program and service levels, ongoing investment in capital improvements and major maintenance in existing parks, completing developments for several new parks, initiating planning for park improvements on recently acquired land and the continuation of essential land acquisition for open space preservation and connectivity.

In 2013 Metroparks of the Toledo Area launched a comprehensive planning process to establish a long-term 20-year vision for the park system. This effort involved creating an inventory of existing conditions and opportunities for protecting high quality natural areas, establishing open space parks and includes a set of site-specific conception master plans for landholdings considered priority areas for the new park development over the next ten years. Both mid-term and long-term priorities which are incorporated into Volume II of the Metroparks Comprehensive Plan.

To fully maximize the potential of this multi-tiered approach, three separate consulting firms were selected based on their specific areas of expertise. Each consulting firm created an independent plan representing one volume of the Metroparks Comprehensive Plan. These three firms worked together to coordinate their data collection, information evaluation and format of the final product. MKSK was retained to review, evaluate, and complete existing preliminary plans for several non-developed park areas and to create conceptual plans for new park development areas in selected locations within the Oak Openings Corridor (i.e., develop the Future Parks Plan).

While the park district land holdings had nearly doubled as the result of a ten year land acquisition levy between 2003 and 2013, Metroparks had not opened a new park for over three decades. However, at the time this comprehensive planning process began in 2013, two major park projects, Howard Farms and The Middlegrounds, were moving forward. Both projects had undergone extensive planning, received outside grant funding for advancement, and included preliminary schedules for completion. We have included these properties in this *Tomorrow Plan* because they are considered parks of tomorrow; however, as previously mentioned, the concept plans were already in place prior to the development of our overall comprehensive planning process.



The Middlegrounds shoreline view looking towards downtown Toledo.



Howard Farms NE corner from canal dike.

Prior to 2013, Metroparks had completed a basic level of planning for Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis National Historic Site, Blue Creek Metropark (previously named Blue Creek Conservation Area), Brookwood, and a future park area near Reynolds Corners (the former Keil Farm), following the National Park Service General Management Plan format. However, due to the economic recession of 2008, progress on these projects had stopped. The development of General Management Plans for emerging park projects included information on resource evaluation and public input. MKSK reviewed and evaluated these existing plans for purpose, functionality, feasibility and cost. Modifications were made as needed and potential phasing strategies and general cost estimates were also developed or updated.

In addition to these project sites, the park system had acquired over 2,000 acres of parkland within the Oak Openings Corridor between Secor and Oak Openings Preserve Metroparks. This parkland had not been formally evaluated for public accessibility or facility development. As part of the *Tomorrow Plan*, MKSK created conceptual plans for four potential public access areas in order to provide a suitable platform for more detailed plans and future development.

Collectively, this *Tomorrow Plan* will help to shape the park district's capital improvement priorities and enabled realistic budget projections through 2022.

HOWARD FARMS



Location:
200 Howard Road
Curtice, Ohio

Acreage: 987

A RESTORED COASTAL WETLAND IN THE HEART OF THE 'WARBLER CAPITAL' WITH A BLUEWATER TRAIL AND DIKE-TOP HIKING.

This 1,000-acre park will become a managed coastal wetland, with trails, a trailhead for the Lake Erie Blueway, managed waterways, a number of habitats, picnicking, waterfowl hunting and birding. The close proximity to large federal and state public lands provides opportunities for a variety of partnerships.

Potential Attractions and Features:

- Future Trailhead for Lake Erie Blueway
- Marsh Kayaking Trails
- Walking Trails (6 planned)
- Birding Hot Spot
- Coastal Marsh Restoration





Howard Farms area map (Tomorrow Plan)

THE MIDDLEGROUNDS



Location:
111 Ottawa Street
Toledo, Ohio

Acreage: 28

A RESTORED NATURAL AREA IN A DOWNTOWN SETTING OVERLOOKING THE LARGEST RIVER ON THE GREAT LAKES.

Planning has begun for a new park on a 28-acre site along the downtown Toledo riverfront historically known as The Middlegrounds. The half-mile of Maumee River frontage begins at the Anthony Wayne Bridge and extends southwest of Martin Luther King Plaza.

The Middlegrounds previously was used as a granary. A bridge was located at the south end of the property, but it was destroyed by a freighter that came loose from its moorings.

Metroparks purchased the land in 2006 with grant funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. Since then, more than 8,000 tons of debris has been removed from the site in preparation for a future urban green space with restored natural areas and sweeping views of the largest river on the Great Lakes. Most of Toledo's bridges can be viewed from The Middlegrounds, as

well as parts of downtown and Toledo's east side neighborhoods across the river. Visitors to the new park will be able to stroll along the waterfront, see Toledo from a new perspective and learn about the city's rich natural and human history and Toledo as an industrial giant.

The first downtown Metropark will add to the momentum that has been building along the riverfront, while serving nearby neighborhoods as a clean, safe, natural destination for families.

Completion of phase one of The Middlegrounds is scheduled for 2015, following a major renovation to the adjacent Anthony Wayne Bridge.

Potential Attractions and Features:

- Blueway Trailhead for Maumee River and Swan Creek
- River Fishing Experience
- Small Watercraft Launch
- Pavilion / Picnicking
- Birding
- Off-leash Area

MISSION STATEMENT

A site that once connected people and goods from the river to land will now connect people back to Toledo's waterfront. The restoration and management of natural areas at Middlegrounds will forge new recreational and interpretive connections between the community and its unique Maumee River heritage.

GOALS

- Respond to the site's natural, historic, and cultural environment
- Increase park system access to urban residents
- Attract users beyond the city
- Encourage users of all ages/abilities
- Provide a balance between active and passive uses
- Encourage year-round use
- Create the opportunity for "green" design solutions
- Physically and visually connect to the community/city

SITE LEGEND

- Turf Grass Lawn / Rescue Mow Edge
- Shrub / Groundcover Bed
- Existing Woods
- Misc. Prairie
- Wetland
- Concrete
- Asphalt
- Special Paving Brick / Colored Concrete
- Special Paving Cobble
- Elevated Walk / Decking
- Large / Canopy Tree
- Small / Ornamental Tree
- Existing Large Tree
- Light Fixtures
- Benches
- Outdoor Tables
- Bicycle Rack
- Kiosk / Display Structure
- Fencing
- Property Line

INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

PHASE 1: INTERPRETIVE ELEMENTS

- ① Historic Native Plantings (wetlands, upland forest, misc. prairie)
- ② Stormwater Treatment System Testing & Education
- ③ Inland Shipping Map
- ④ Riverview Viewing Scopes
- ⑤ Misc. Interpretive Sign Panels / Kiosks (Locations TBD)
- ⑥ Interactive Material Handling Playscape



The Middlegrounds area map (Tomorrow Plan)

BLUE CREEK METROPARK



Location:
10708 Neapolis-Waterville
Road
Whitehouse, Ohio
Acreage: 579

A SERENE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FEATURING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP, LAND-BASED HUMAN ENDEAVORS AND ACTIVE RECREATION.

This Plan builds upon the 2006 General Management Plan (GMP) for Blue Creek Conservation Area (the southern portion of what is now Blue Creek Metropark). It states the vision for the 579-acre Blue Creek Conservation Area as:

'A premier educational facility showcasing conservation of northwest Ohio's natural, agricultural and wildlife resources and promoting the importance of agriculture to the State of Ohio's Economy.'

Surrounded by agricultural lands rich with local and natural history, the unique character of Blue Creek Metropark continuously evolves through changing land uses.



Metroparks of the Toledo Area (Metroparks) operates Blue Creek through a partnership with Lucas Soil and Water Conservation District (LSWCD), the Village of Whitehouse, the Anthony Wayne Youth Foundation (AWYF) and Nature's Nursery.

PARTNER MISSION STATEMENTS

Metroparks of the Toledo Area (Metroparks)

The mission of Metroparks of the Toledo Area is to conserve the region's natural resources by creating, developing, improving, protecting, and promoting clean, safe, and natural parks and open spaces for the benefit, enjoyment, education, and general welfare of the public.

Village of Whitehouse (Village)

The Mission of the Village of Whitehouse is to provide efficient service to the citizens and improvement to the community of the Village of Whitehouse.

Lucas Soil & Water Conservation District (LSWCD)

To promote conservation of our soil, water and other natural resources through education, information and technical assistance.

Nature's Nursery

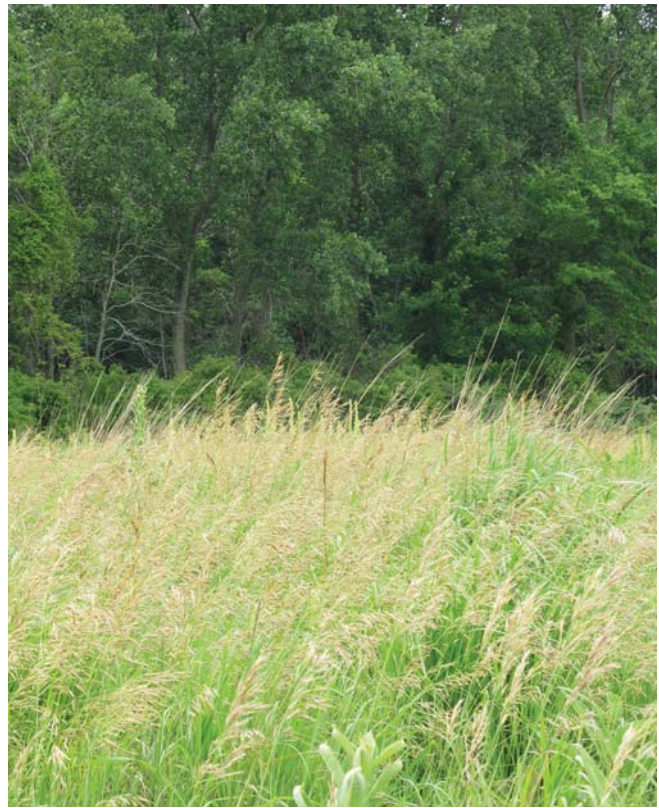
To improve the well-being of Northwest Ohio wildlife populations through public education and wildlife rehabilitation with an emphasis on coexistence.

Anthony Wayne Youth Foundation (AWYF)

To support youth enrichment by providing funds and resources specifically for the needs of Anthony Wayne area youth organizations as it relates to programs, education and facilities, with a primary focus on active recreation.



Glacial grooves at Blue Creek.



Tall grass prairie at Blue Creek.

SITE HISTORY

The site is steeped in history, dating to the late 1700s when native people lived, hunted and farmed in the area. The property was the site of limestone quarries in the mid- to late-1800s. In 1917, the city of Toledo bought the land to build a prison work farm. The Toledo House of Corrections operated onsite from 1918 until early 1991.

Located on the edge of the Oak Openings region, Blue Creek Metropark has glacial grooves, several ponds and wetlands, and restored tall grass prairie. A focal point is a 20,873-square foot barn with a gambrel roof built in the late 1920s.

Source: 2006 GMP

DRIVERS

- Strengthen partnerships with Whitehouse, Anthony Wayne Youth Foundation, LSWCD and Nature's Nursery to realize the full potential of the property and the programs.
- Reorganize and clarify park spaces.
- Establish a proactive approach to future park development, operations and management.
- Unique programming: Seed production, wildlife rehabilitation, active sports recreation, components of the historic prison work farm, significant water recreation opportunities.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clarify nature and expectations for partnerships (both near and long-term).
- Use existing public roads as primary park roadway network.
- Develop a hierarchy of trail systems to serve park operations, improve visitor access opportunities and heighten the visitor experience.
- Simplify and organize the partner 'zones'.
- Strengthen Metroparks identity around perimeter of property with appropriate plantings and hardscape treatments.

NORTH ZONE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work with the Village to ensure that AWYF's needs are met (flexible field space to respond to shifting use, field rotation, and long-term maintenance requirements).
- Identify zones within recreation area that can be planted with trees and other native plants.
- Strengthen Metroparks identity with appropriate plantings and hardscape treatments.
- Identify Blue Creek Metropark as a trailhead for the Wabash Cannonball Trail; provide parking, signage and other amenities.
- Establish a comprehensive system of sustainable stormwater management practices throughout Blue Creek Metropark.
 - Riparian buffers, both wooded and herbaceous along all creeks, ditches and intermittent streams that feed into Mosquito Creek and Blue Creek.

- Provide wooded or herbaceous buffer around the quarry.
- Establish biofiltration beds within and adjacent to parking lots and drives.
- Strive to incorporate permeable pavement in parking bays.
- Minimize permanent paving to serve typical demand and not occasional extremes.
- Provide interpretive signs to educate the public about sustainability and its benefits to the environment.
- Provide an appropriate public facility adjacent to the quarry and the sledding hill to enable and enhance year-round activities.
- Provide Metroparks kiosks and / or interpretive displays across the park, including within the various public facilities, to educate the public about visitor opportunities throughout Blue Creek Metropark.
- Protect the glacial grooves and provide interpretive signs about them.
- Provide an amphitheater on the north side of Nona France Quarry for small music events, plays and other similar activities. This combined with other park facilities could provide excellent space for community festivals and events.
- Extend the woodland around the quarry, the sledding hill and the intermittent stream to enhance the habitat and aesthetic quality of the site.
- Work with the Village to evaluate the need to expand recreational fields.




Blue Creek recreation area concept drawing.

- Capitalize on high visibility to general public and recreation participants by emphasizing natural features and sustainable development.
 - Strengthen Metroparks identity throughout the property, and especially along the edges of the recreation field area with tree and native herbaceous plantings along Providence Street and Stiles Road.
 - Provide a system of wayfinding signs along the edge of facilities to direct visitors to the various fields, playground and other park amenities.
 - Strive for all future development to comply with LEED1 and Sustainable Sites Initiative2 guidelines.
 - Provide centralized, visible recycling bins.
 - Provide centralized, visible compost facility to process landscape and turf grass trimmings to provide natural amendments for the fields.
 - Over time, shift to high efficiency, cut-off light fixtures for parking, drives and recreation fields as appropriate.
- Provide a concession / restroom facility near the baseball diamonds or one of the primary parking areas.
- Provide small picnic shelters for team and family use, adjacent to the primary parking areas and along the edges of the quarry and woodlands.
- Extend Stiles Road to the east with a turn around to provide access into this area of the park.
- Work with the partners to determine the highest and best use of the 45-acre eastern agricultural field.
 - Enhance street frontage to improve the image and functionality for both AWYF and Metroparks.
 - Provide a paved sidewalk along the street to enhance pedestrian safety and provide a cleaner, better-maintained edge.
 - Establish plantings of native prairie plants alternating with hedges of native shrubs to help define the park edge and make use of the area beneath overhead power lines.
 - Plant native shade trees east of the power lines to provide structure and shade.
 - Establish a pedestrian barrier around plantings to protect them from foot traffic.



White barn at Blue Creek.

SOUTH ZONE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Renovate farmyard as primary day use / program area with centralized, convenient access to seed production, Nature's Nursery, LSWCD, picnicking, trails and pond.
 - Evaluate adaptive re-use or removal of farmhouse.
 - Direct vehicles north of the farmhouse and provide visitor parking and bus access from that side of the farmyard to better separate pedestrians and vehicles.
 - Conduct a specific planning initiative to evaluate the most appropriate use and possible renovation of the white barn.
 - Enhance the programming and internal structures of the walled garden to more fully utilize this unique feature. Retain the stone walls to maintain the historical, highly aesthetic element.
 - Seek smaller-scale demonstration plots within the farmyard to demonstrate some of the conservation focus of LSWCD and the Metroparks native seed production program.
 - Provide enhanced restroom facilities within the stone garage to enhance the visitor experience.
 - Provide a public outreach area within the seed production building. LSWCD should have an office there and Nature's Nursery should have a kiosk and / or displays to direct visitors to their primary facility in the hog barn.
 - Consolidate Nature's Nursery operations to one side of Schadel Road.
 - Evaluate Nature's Nursery facilities suitability as a visitor destination in proximity to the hog barn.
 - Renovate the hog barn to provide both public outreach space and 'back-of-house' space adequate for the rehabilitation activities.
 - Provide meeting rooms and space at the hog barn to enable Metroparks and LSWCD to have a presence and direct visitors to their programs.
 - Provide public display cages / areas on the north side of the rehabilitation yard, between the hog barn and the raptor house.
 - Provide an additional wildlife rehabilitation enclosure with cages to the south of the existing yard.
 - Service access for Nature's Nursery shall use the southern drive that leads to the wildlife yards.
 - Public access shall be from the drive, parking and trails to the north of the hog barn.
- 
- Milkweed at Blue Creek.*
- Consolidate LSWCD operations generally to the west and south of the farmyard and enhance visibility to the public.
 - Explore opportunities for more diverse agricultural demonstration fields.
 - Make the agricultural conservation activities more visible to the public with enhanced public viewing opportunities.
 - Provide interpretive signs and displays to explain the agricultural conservation demonstrations.
 - Provide public paths through some of the agricultural demonstration fields.
 - Place most distinct, easily understood demonstration activities in highly visible areas adjacent to the farmyard and along roads and the perimeter of the park.
 - Better organize the composting facility and place it in a visible location to simplify access for people contributing materials and for public education.
 - Consider showcasing composting cycle adjacent to the farmyard: sources of material, the composting process, and use of the compost in small fields.

- Consider placing demonstrations of conventional agricultural practice and leading edge conservation agricultural practices in adjacent demonstration fields to clearly demonstrate differences.
- Provide demonstration stream crossing across Blue Creek.
- Establish partnership with private sports club to expand opportunities for the public.
- Provide visitor amenities to encourage and accommodate picnicking and day use at the pond.
 - Picnic shelter and tables.
 - Fishing docks.
 - Trails, both improved and unimproved.
- Capitalize on high visibility to general public and recreation participants by emphasizing natural features and sustainable development (as previously identified in the North Zone Recommendations).
 - Renovate demonstration wetland as needed to restore functionality and demonstrate water quality treatment.
 - Showcase some organic and other sustainable gardening techniques suitable for small farmers and home owners in the walled garden and around the farmyard.
- Provide a full complement of visitor amenities including trails, picnic shelters and tables, restrooms, and convenient parking.
 - The existing improved trail should be expanded as part of a system of diverse trails with varying lengths to suite different visitor needs.
 - Trails should include designated paths, improved aggregate trails and fully accessible paved trails and boardwalks where appropriate. This variety of trails will encourage a wider spectrum of the public to enjoy the different areas of the park.
 - Shelters, restrooms and other structures should be designed and constructed to the same level of quality found in some of the District's original parks.



Blue Creek Conservation Area map - North Zone (Tomorrow Plan)



Blue Creek Conservation Area map – South Zone (Tomorrow Plan)

BROOKWOOD



LOCATED ON A BLUFF OVERLOOKING SWAN CREEK, BROOKWOOD CREATES AN OPPORTUNITY TO BLEND THE PROMOTION AND ENJOYMENT OF THE ARTS WITH NATURE.

Brookwood's intimate setting in the Swan Creek Corridor offers a venue for harmony in music and nature to cultivate visitor inspiration.

DRIVERS

- Property transfer documents stipulate some programming requirements.
- The small site in a residential setting limits public use opportunities.
- Location along Swan Creek and adjacency to the Anderson property is an opportunity for continued expansion of the Swan Creek Corridor.
- New opportunity for Metroparks to provide nature-inspired music, arts and other programming.



CONNECTIVITY CONSIDERATIONS

- The 5.2-acre Brookwood parcel donated by Virginia Belt's estate in 2004 is adjacent to 48.6 acres of additional property donated by Virginia Belt in 1999.
- Brookwood is contiguous with 67.4 acres of Metroparks-owned property donated by the Andersons in 1995. An additional 16.3-acre property owned by the Andersons (including a 12-acre pond) may be transferred to Metroparks as early as 2026 but no later than 2040.
- Near-term use of the site will be as a program destination with pedestrian connectivity to the adjacent neighborhood, a potential blue-trail portal on Swan Creek and visual connectivity to the Anderson property.
- In the long-term, this parcel may serve as a portal to the larger Andersons / Belt properties and the Swan Creek Corridor. It could be connected with a variety of trails and possibly a footbridge to the Andersons property across Swan Creek.
- Vehicular access to the site is limited to Swan Creek Drive, a residential street in a quiet residential area.
- Site use should be by reservation or program only to control and limit the number of vehicles to access the neighborhood. The site should be gated during non-program hours to discourage undesired vehicular use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

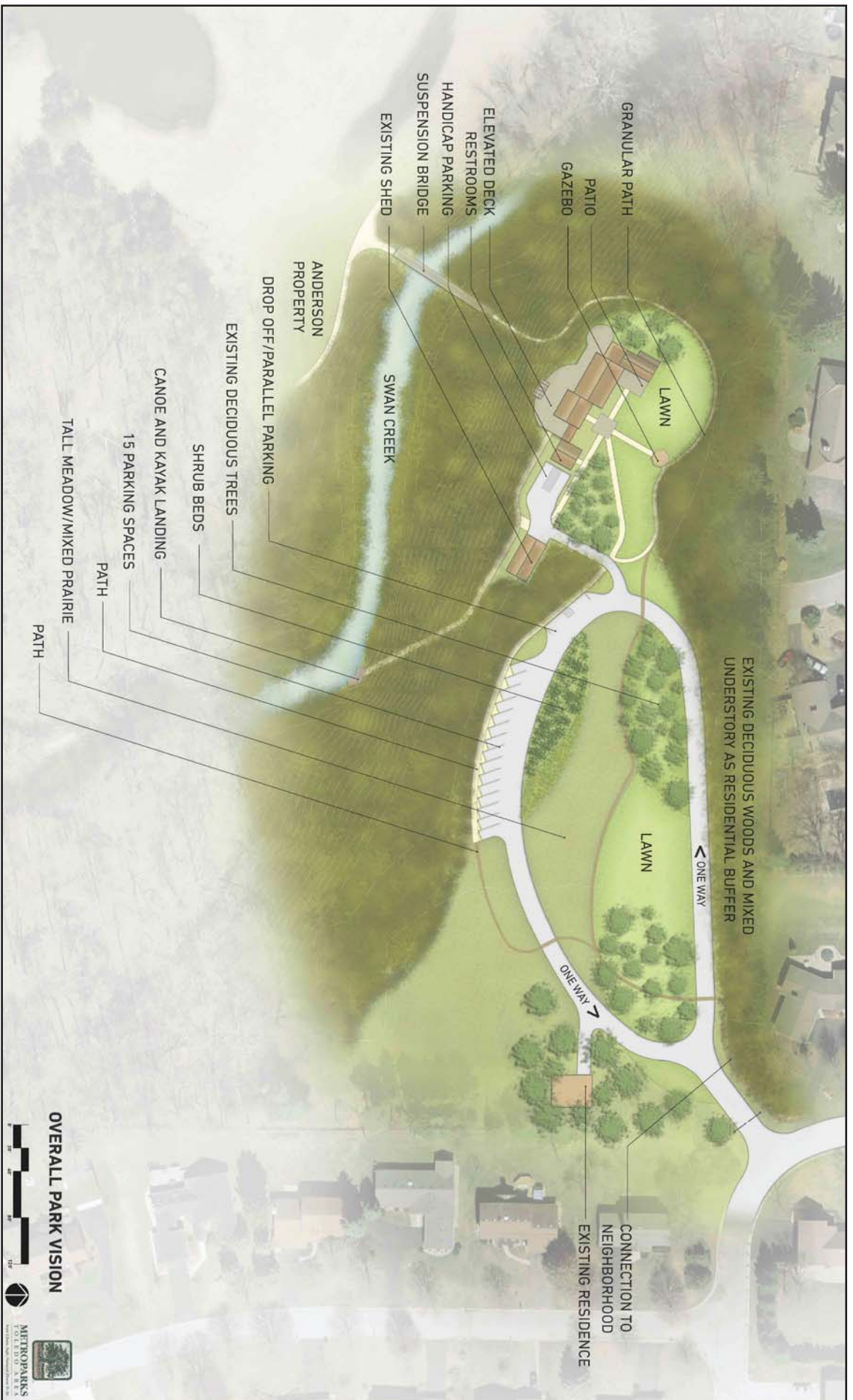
- Renovate the house to protect the structure and provide opportunities for desired programming.
- Provide limited parking for small events.
- Work with the City of Toledo Fire Department to provide adequate emergency access that does not overwhelm the site with pavement.
- Provide trails, boardwalks and possibly a pedestrian bridge to connect to Swan Creek and the Andersons property.
- Provide outdoor program area on the ravine side of the house.
- Strengthen evergreen buffer with four-season vegetative species between the property and adjacent residences.
- Establish native meadow plantings to increase habitat while preserving the open character of the parcel.
- Develop a natural resource management and interpretive / education plan for this property and the Swan Creek Corridor.
- Pursue opportunities to emphasize natural features and sustainable development principles.
- Strengthen Metroparks identity along entry drive with tree and native herbaceous plantings.
- Strive for all future development to comply with LEED1 and Sustainable Sites Initiative2 guidelines.
- Provide centralized, visible recycling bins.



Belt estate viewed from ravine.



Creek at back of the Belt estate.



Brookwood/Swan Creek Corridor map (Tomorrow Plan)

FALLEN TIMBERS BATTLEFIELD



SITE OF THE “LAST BATTLE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION” WHICH WAS THE CULMINATING EVENT THAT DEMONSTRATED THE TENACITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IN THEIR QUEST FOR WESTERN EXPANSION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DOMINANCE IN THE OLD NORTHWEST TERRITORY.

The rich resources and setting of the Maumee River Valley influenced events leading up to the Battle of Fallen Timbers.



BACKGROUND

- Fallen Timbers Battlefield is part of the ‘Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis National Historic Site’ managed by Metroparks of the Toledo Area. It is also an Affiliated Unit of the National Park Service.
- Fallen Timbers is actually three sites, two of which are currently open to the public. This collection of historical places is still in the planning stages and offers little in the way of visitor services and interpretation.
- Passport stamps: Until the Battlefield is open visitors can have their National Parks Passport stamped at the Maumee Branch of the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, located on River Road.

THE THREE SITES

- Fallen Timbers Battlefield - The Battlefield is not yet open to the public. The property is located largely in the City of Maumee at the intersection of US23 / I-475 and US24 (Anthony Wayne Trail) with portions of the property extending into Monclova Township. There is currently limited access to the Battlefield during special events or park programs.
- Fallen Timbers Monument - This impressive monument to the important battle is across the Anthony Wayne Trail from the actual battlefield. A bike / pedestrian bridge connects the two sites. The monument is situated on a bluff overlooking Side Cut Metropark and the beautiful Maumee River.
- Fort Miamis - The former British fort, located several miles away on River Road, played a key role in the Battle of Fallen Timbers and, later, the War of 1812. The park is open, and much of the earthworks used to create the fort are still visible.

Source: Toledo Metroparks Website

DRIVERS

- Protect the natural and historic resources.
- Meet needs of both history enthusiasts and general park visitors.
- Enhance opportunities for guided and self-interpretation of the history of the site and the natural resource features.
- Develop the site to respect the legal constraints limiting site disturbance.
- Capitalize on convenient access to the Wabash Cannonball Trail.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide a trail system with a variety of routes and surfaces to increase options for visitors.
- Establish an ADA accessible trail loop that takes visitors from the parking and visitor facility to the primary historic interpretation sites.
- Provide additional primitive trails to other areas of the site for causal nature observation and recreation.
- Identify and develop the program area to serve as a public trailhead for the Wabash Cannonball Trail.
- Clarify and improve the link to Wabash Cannonball Trail.
- Establish a clear, convenient paved trail link between the Wabash Cannonball Trail and the Visitor Center and restrooms.



Fallen Timbers Monument.

- Develop appropriate amenities to serve trail users, such as shaded rest areas, bike racks, a drinking fountain and restrooms.
- Develop park amenities utilizing sustainable development principles.
- Provide interpretive signs to educate visitors about natural features and sustainable development techniques and measures that have been implemented at this site.
- Strive for all new development to comply with LEED1 and Sustainable Sites Initiative2 guidelines.
- Provide recycling bins.
- Provide limited, unobtrusive parking for visitors and design parking area to serve bus maneuvering and parking.
- Strengthen Metroparks identity along Jerome Road with appropriate plantings and hardscape treatments.
- Protect historical resources.
- Provide appropriate interpretive facilities and signs close to but not within the actual historical sites.
- Assure that park development within the primary historical zones is done in accordance with the General Management Plan and conforms to recommendations of historians to protect the historic resources.
- Initiate reforestation of the former agricultural fields and residential parcels using bare root stock and a planting bar (or similar low-impact planting method) to protect the site's historical resources.
- Archeological resources discovered on the site shall be stored in secure, appropriately conditioned storage space, approved by the appropriate historical preservation authorities.
- Replicas of archeological materials may be used for on-site display.
- Renovate the existing ranch-style house at 4949 Jerome Road to provide public program space in a manner that does not require regular staffing.
- Provide public restrooms at the ranch house that can be locked from the remainder of the house and accessed by the public when the house is unstaffed.
- As funding becomes available, renovate other areas of the ranch house to provide interpretive displays, areas for indoor program use and office and storage space as needed.
- Facilitate interpretation of history of the site by providing interpretive nodes close to significant points of the battle.
- Work with adjacent property owners to establish buffers to protect and enhance the visitor experience.



Fallen Timbers Battlefield area.



Fallen Timbers bike/pedestrian bridge that connects the two sites together.



Fallen Timbers Battlefield map (Tomorrow Plan)

FORT MIAMIS



A GATEWAY TO THE SCENIC MAUMEE RIVER AND THE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE.

The Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis National Historic Site have been protected by Metroparks to help inspire a reverence for historical and natural preservation.

DRIVERS

- Meet needs of history enthusiasts and general park visitors.
- Provide for interpretation of history and natural features.
- Protect the historic and natural resources.
- Protect and enhance the site's scenic views of the Maumee River.
- Utilize the site's strategic location as a portal to the Maumee River blueway trail.





River view from Fort Miamis site.

- Establish appropriate vegetation between stone blocks to protect areas that are not currently eroded.
- Strengthen park's orientation to Fallen Timbers Battlefield, Fort Meigs and other historic sites.
- Extend the trail system to expand the vantage points of the fort site to enhance visitor experience near the earthworks.
- Provide vegetative screenings between park and adjacent residences.
- Provide facilities and exhibits to facilitate both guided and self-interpretation.
- Emphasize natural features and sustainable development principles.
- Strengthen Metroparks identity with appropriate tree and native herbaceous buffer plantings along perimeter.
- Minimize impervious surfaces.
- Provide interpretive signs about the riverine environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve the vehicular access for cars and buses.
- Provide additional parking for cars.
- Provide loop drive to accommodate bus access and parking.
- Consider use of pervious turf pavers for parking spaces along bus loop to discourage undesired use of fort earthworks for sledding.
- Strengthen orientation of park visitors to the Maumee River.
- Improve access for non-motorized boats and pedestrians to the Maumee River.
- Establish boardwalks and overlooks within the wooded slopes to better connect the site to the river.
- Selectively thin limbs and understory to provide views of the river.
- Provide floating docks suitable for non-motorized, personal watercraft.
- Highlight the connections between the history and the natural environment with interpretive signs.
- Repair and protect the shoreline from erosion.
- Provide large stone blocks to prevent erosion and provide platforms for fishing and sitting.



Fort Miamis sign.



Concept drawing of floating docks.



Concept drawing of large stones to prevent erosion.



Fort Miamis map (Tomorrow Plan)

FUTURE METROPARK (FORMERLY KEIL FARM)



CENTRALLY LOCATED SITE THAT CAN PROVIDE YEAR ROUND PUBLIC RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES, NATIVE HABITATS AND REGIONAL STORMWATER MANAGEMENT BENEFITS.

DRIVERS

- Opportunity to redistribute park visitation across the park district from more heavily used parks such as Wildwood Preserve.
- Most of the site has been disturbed; few constraints on development.
- Site may have the ability to help alleviate flooding and stormwater management issues downstream.
- Agricultural history is one of several messages to be conveyed at the site.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Immediately determine the permanent name for this park.
- Complete acquisition of the remaining 34 acres of farmland (including barn) still owned by the Keil family.
- Explore the potential to re-grade the ditches and site topography to provide a system of permanent ponds and wetlands for regional stormwater management, habitat and recreational opportunities.
- Consider designating the south pond as the 'active' pond with fishing, ice skating and other recreational opportunities deemed appropriate (with final approval from NOAA, subject to federal deed restrictions).
- Provide wetlands with native plantings along some areas of the ponds to provide natural aesthetics, wildlife habitat and stormwater management benefits.
- Respect federal deed restrictions on development and planting within 33-acre southeastern quadrant of the site.
- Take advantage of the site's current disturbed condition to provide public amenities and recreational offerings that might not be appropriate at other, more environmentally sensitive Metropark properties.



Keil Farm tall grass and woods.



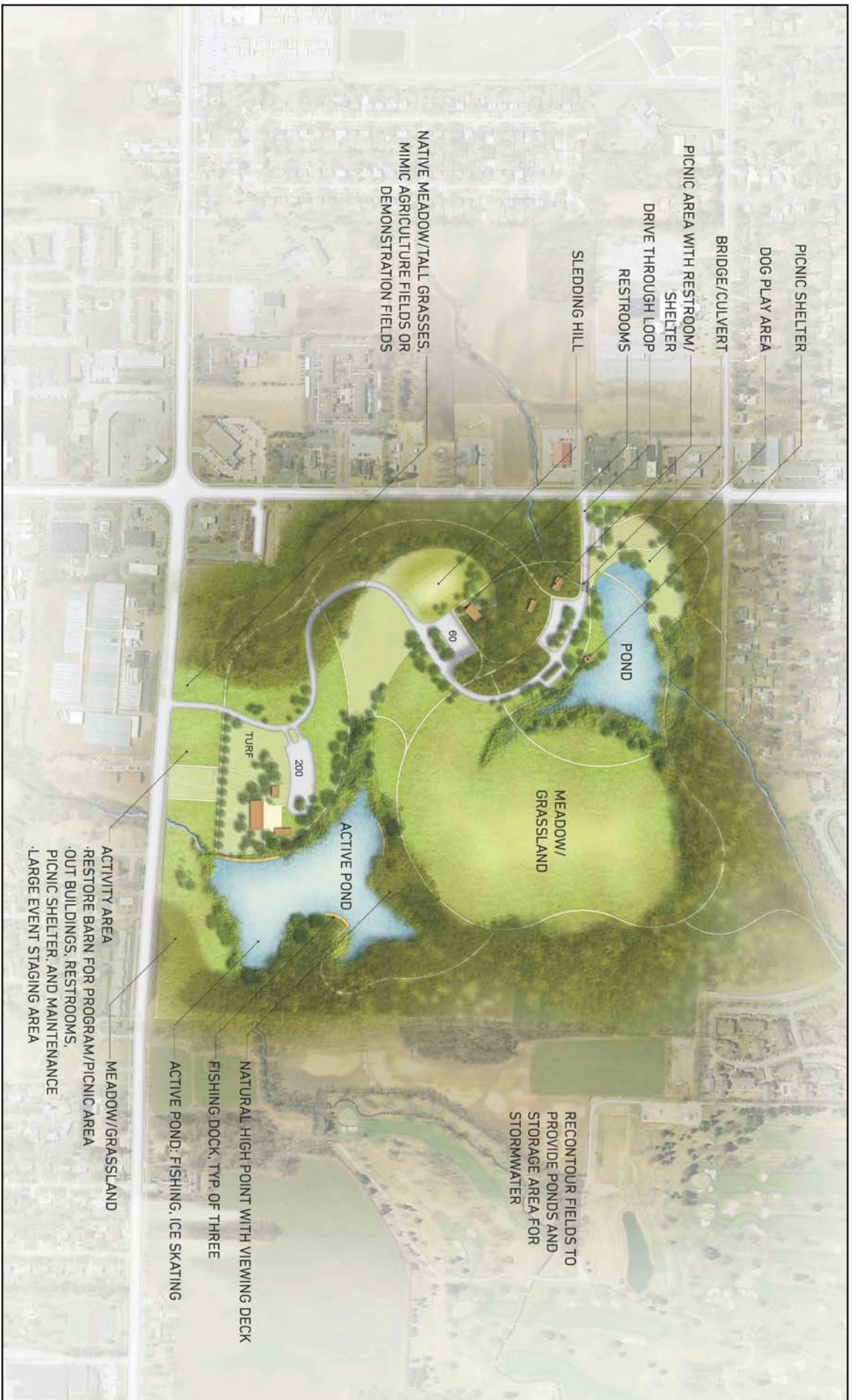
Keil Farm wetland area.

- Evaluate the potential renovation of the existing barn / farmyard to serve as primary day use / program area and staging area for large events.
- Renovate the barn to provide a public use facility that preserves the essential agricultural character of the site.
- Develop the program area to serve large gatherings, special events, cross country meets and other underserved uses.
- Provide native meadows to create a distinct aesthetic that recalls the property's agricultural heritage.
- Introduce neighborhood trail linkages.
- Provide accessible and primitive trail links to residential neighborhood to the north.
- Provide accessible trail links to both Reynolds Road and Hill Road.
- Enhance this segment of the Reynolds Road corridor to claim the frontage and demonstrate the aesthetic potential of the corridor.
- Strengthen Metroparks identity around perimeter of property with appropriate plantings and hardscape treatments.
- Work with City Transportation Engineers to identify and celebrate the watercourse crossings.
- Provide opportunities for winter activities: trails, ice skating, sledding.

- Use fill material generated by pond construction to build a sledding hill.
- Design the active pond to accommodate ice skating.
- Designate some of the trails as cross-country ski trails.
- Provide a dog play area in northwest part of parcel.
- Consider providing a dog 'beach' and access to the pond, separated from the larger areas of the pond by a boardwalk.
- Provide limited parking, a fenced dog play area, water, picnic tables and possibly a shelter or other shade structure in this general area.
- Provide access drive that enables a 'drive-through' experience.
- Connect Reynolds Road and Hill Avenue to simplify operations and visitor access.
- Cross Deline Ditch and the end of the pond with a culvert or small bridge to enable all visitors to physically and visually engage with the ponds and wetlands.
- Capitalize on high visibility to general public and recreation participants by emphasizing natural features and sustainable development.
- Strive for all new development to comply with LEED1 and Sustainable Sites Initiative2 guidelines.
- Provide convenient recycling bins.



Keil farm.

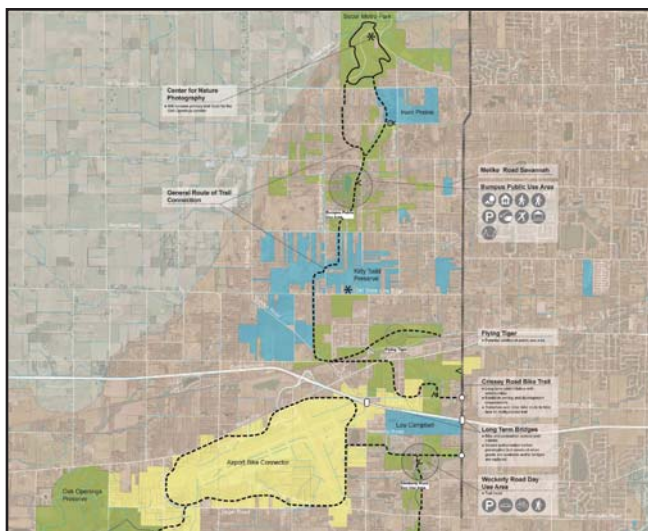


Keil Property map (Tomorrow Plan)

OAK OPENINGS CORRIDOR



A BIOLOGICAL AND RECREATIONAL CORRIDOR OF NATURAL BEAUTY, RARE PLANTS AND ANIMALS, AND QUALITY RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES STRETCHING ACROSS “ONE OF THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH”.



DRIVERS

- Enhance linkages to protected open spaces: pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile between Oak Openings Preserve and Secor Metropark.
- Protect, enhance and promote awareness of the corridor's globally-significant natural resources.
- For near-term development, focus on selected nodes of activity.
- Develop strategies to physically connect the corridor across significant barriers to north-south connectivity such as Interstate 80 / 90 and the major railroad crossing north of Airport Highway.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Communicate criteria and priorities for future land acquisitions based on connectivity, public use potential, and natural significance.
- Develop and foster partnerships within the Oak Openings Corridor with clear expectations for each partner.
- Establish a consistent palette of materials, signage, and building / hardscape details for Metroparks properties within the Oak Openings Corridor.
- Identify and sign properties owned and operated by Metroparks of the Toledo Area.
- Consider use of solar power, composting toilets and other sustainable waste treatment technologies for remote areas with low levels of public use.
- Prioritize opportunities for connectivity and public use.
- Strengthen and celebrate the connections to Secor and Oak Openings Preserve as the major trail heads for the corridor.
- Target land acquisition efforts to establish continuous linked properties suitable for development of a diverse trail system.
- Develop appropriate trails based on environmental conditions.
- Develop appropriate trail loops.
- Identify and sign a driving trail through the Oak Openings Corridor.
- Identify appropriate access portals and destinations along the trails to accommodate a variety of users with different abilities.
- Work with partners to establish connecting trails in the corridor for protected lands not owned by Metroparks.
- Work with county officials to improve use of existing public roads as a primary park roadway network for driving and biking tours.



Oak Openings Corridor.



Concept drawing for Oak Openings Corridor.

NORTH ZONE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop the pond area on the west side of Eber Road as a day-use area.
- Install fishing docks and a picnic area adjacent to the pond.
- Consider stocking the pond for fishing.
- Consider use of the pond area for outdoor recreation such as canoeing, kayaking and adjacent areas for cross country skiing.
- Provide one or more picnic shelters, a restroom facility, adequate parking and trails for the pond area.
- Evaluate opportunity for limited primitive camping sites.
- Provide adequate vegetative screening between public use areas and nearby residences to enhance the natural experience.
- Work with the Nature Conservancy and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to implement north-south trails including sections through Irwin Prairie State Nature Preserve and Kitty Todd Nature Preserve.

CRISSEY ROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

- The large 302-acre block of properties bounded by Airport Highway, Crissey Road, Eber Road, and the Ohio Turnpike includes examples of several rare Oak Openings plant communities. This area features excellent opportunities to provide interpretive programs for school groups and the general public.

- The 174-acre Geiser Road property currently used by the Flying Tigers RC Model Club is already partially developed with a viewing shelter, parking and a mowed field for the remote control airplane events. Metroparks can continue to work with the Flying Tigers to provide a unique recreational opportunity.
- The Geiser Road area could provide for more public use with the addition of picnic facilities and trails.
- Work with adjacent communities to establish a regional multi-purpose trail along Crissey Road.
- Implementation of a regional trail will likely require a long-term commitment from Metroparks, Lucas County, Springfield Township and other partners, including establishment of zoning and development standards for the trail.
- Investigate other potential community links that would provide a link to the Crissey Road area.
- Work with turnpike authority and TMACOG to plan for bicycle and pedestrian connectivity on the bridges across I-80 / 90 when they need to be replaced.
- Work to establish an agreement with the Ohio Turnpike Authority.
- Seek opportunities to secure transportation enhancement funds or grants to complete the crossing.



Shelter example.

SOUTH ZONE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a day-use area on Weckerly Road at the former off-road vehicle area.
- Although previously disturbed by off-road vehicle use, this area features populations of several disturbance-tolerant Oak Openings plant species now designated as threatened or endangered.
- Develop the area with a small parking area, picnic shelter, tables, a restroom building and other passive recreation amenities.
- Complete a detailed feasibility study for the development of a paved bike trail connecting the Weckerly Road area north to the Crissey Road area and south to Oak Openings Preserve.
- Provide a variety of accessible and primitive trails.
- Develop a second day-use area at the Springer Farm parcel located adjacent to the Wabash Cannonball Trail
- This site may provide an opportunity to develop stormwater management wetlands and ponds which will offer additional public use and aesthetic values.
- This site should be developed to include one or more picnic shelters, restrooms, drinking water, parking, a small playground, trails and a variety of passive recreation amenities.
- If developed, the stormwater wetlands / ponds could include fishing and observation docks, boardwalks and other features to maximize opportunities for nature interpretation and visitor access to these natural systems.
- This site is adjacent to the Wabash Cannonball trail; bike racks and a short loop bike path could enable trail users to experience this area as a stop on the trail.
- Establish a bicycle loop trail around the airport to provide connectivity between Oak Openings Preserve and other parts of the corridor. While not as scenic as more natural areas within the corridor, this route would provide a safe, off-road option for bicyclists wishing to avoid public roads.
- Work with partners and other landowners to establish both paved and primitive trails in the corridor.
- Work with Monclova Township and adjacent property owners to establish trail links between the Springer Farm parcel and the Weckerly Road area.
- Identify appropriate access portals and feature destinations along the Wabash Cannonball Trail to serve a wide range of users with various degrees of fitness.
- Work with township officials and adjacent property owners to establish a paved link between the north and south forks of the Wabash Cannonball Trail.

PICNIC SHELTERS

- High quality architecture and a distinctive style will help establish a clear and consistent image of the Oak Opening Corridor.
- The design should continue the tradition of high quality materials and detailing that has been established throughout Metroparks.
- Maintenance considerations must be balanced with aesthetics, especially at more remote locations.

THREE-SEASON SHELTERS

- High quality architecture and a distinctive style will help establish a clear and consistent image of the Oak Opening Corridor.
- The design and detailing should continue the Metroparks tradition of providing facilities that do not require excessive staffing requirements.
- Three season shelters will extend and enhance public use throughout much of the year.

PRIMITIVE CAMPING

- Primitive camping will provide opportunities to expand public use within areas of Lucas County where opportunities are currently limited.
- Facilities could range from simple clearings designated for tents, to distinct camp sites with picnic tables, charcoal grills, fire pits and possibly primitive shelters or yurts.
- Camp sites should be located to provide relatively easy access with appropriate screening for privacy.
- Sites should be within reasonable distance from restrooms and drinking water where possible.



Campsite example at Farnsworth Metropark.

TRAILS

- A variety of trail types will serve the widest segment of the public.
- In many corridor areas, trails may need to be maintained as primitive paths, or wood / metal mesh boardwalk to avoid damage to the natural environment while also providing public use opportunities.
- Opportunities to develop accessible and paved multi-purpose trails may be limited in many portions of the corridor. Where possible, development of paved trails will provide public utility to the greatest range of users.



Campsite example at Oak Openings Preserve.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY



INTRODUCTION

The *Tomorrow Plan* identifies a range of physical improvements to be implemented over time. The vision that each plan represents will be accomplished through a series of individual site, building and resource management projects. Some of the projects will be performed by Metroparks personnel; some will be publicly bid and built by private contractors. Some of these improvements may be developed as joint initiatives between Metroparks and various partners.

The following implementation strategy identifies the broad recommendations of each concept plan and provides reasonable cost estimates for those improvements based on the needs and priorities of

Metroparks over the next twenty years. These cost estimates are conceptual projections based on many assumptions about existing conditions, program needs and construction methods and materials. These cost ranges must be further evaluated to provide additional details on specific improvements, implementation methods, and design criteria prior to establishing specific capital budget line items.

These cost ranges are based on general square foot costs in 2014 dollars. The costs are for construction only; they do not include land acquisition, furnishings, project soft costs, consultant fees or permitting costs.



Blue Creek Concept drawing.

BLUE CREEK METROPARK (North)

B-1 QUARRY DAY USE AREA

The east edge of the quarry would be modified to provide an appropriate public swimming area with a beach. A new public use facility would provide support for year-round outdoor activities. The building cost is based on a 10,000 square foot structure with a sq. ft. cost range of \$175 to \$225. A new entry drive, parking lot, walks, picnic tables and plantings are included.

Approximate Cost: \$2.35M to \$4.25M

B-2 NORTH PARKING, RESTROOM, SHELTERS

These costs assume all new 24-foot wide regular duty asphalt entry drive and parking areas. Costs include a restroom facility, picnic shelter, picnic tables, general site enhancements, modest grading, storm sewers and lighting.

Approximate Cost: \$1.1M to \$4.8M

B-3 STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

These costs assume all new 6-foot wide concrete sidewalks, continuous 16-foot wide beds of native plants, street trees, signs and post, and chain edging.

Approximate Cost: \$300K to \$600K

B-4 PARKING LOT VISITOR AMENITIES

These costs assume all new 24-foot wide regular duty asphalt drive and parking areas. Costs include bio-swales along perimeter of parking areas, street

trees, a picnic shelter, picnic tables, restroom facility, general site enhancements, modest grading, storm sewers and lighting.

Approximate Cost: \$700K to \$950K

B-5 PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS

These costs assume all new 24-foot wide regular duty asphalt drive and parking areas. Costs include bio-swales along perimeter of parking areas, street trees, picnic tables, paths, general site enhancements, modest grading, storm sewers and lighting.

Approximate Cost: \$1.1M to \$1.5M

B-6 ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

These costs assume all new 24-foot wide regular duty asphalt entry drive and 60-foot diameter turn around, a picnic shelter, paths, picnic tables, general site enhancements, modest grading, storm sewers and lighting.

Approximate Cost: \$360K to \$500K

B-7 MISCELLANEOUS PARK IMPROVEMENTS

These costs assume the development of trails as indicated, general picnic areas, program areas, landscape improvements, land restoration and reforestation.

Approximate Cost: \$300K to \$600K

BLUE CREEK METROPARK (South)

B-8 FARMYARD PROGRAM AREA

A new 24-foot wide regular duty asphalt drive and parking areas north of the main program area. Costs include general site improvements, tree plantings, a picnic shelter, picnic tables, a restroom facility and lighting. These costs assume that the agricultural fields, native seed areas and other resource-related work will be done by Metroparks personnel or their partners. The extent of the barn renovation has not yet been determined, for the purposes of this cost estimate a sq. ft. cost range of \$150 to \$250 (based on the footprint) has been used.

Approximate Cost: \$1.6M to \$3.0M

B-9 NATURE'S NURSERY COMPOUND

These costs assume renovation of the hog barn, new animal containment yard with cages, public display yards / cages and general site enhancements. The extent of the hog barn renovation has not yet been determined, for the purposes of this cost estimate a sq. ft. cost range of \$100 to \$200 has been used.

Approximate Cost: \$1.2M to \$2.6M

B-10 NEW DAY USE AREA

These costs include two small picnic shelters, picnic tables, paths and general site improvements. It is assumed that people using this area will utilize restrooms and parking within the Nature's Nursery compound.

Approximate Cost: \$160K to \$325K

B-11 BIRD OBSERVATION AREA

These costs including a viewing blind or observation tower, 20 parking spaces, modest grading and paths.

Approximate Cost: \$90K to \$170K

B-12 STREAM PROTECTION IMPROVEMENTS

These costs include rehabilitation of the wetland complex and construction of two new stream crossings.

Approximate Cost: \$75K to \$145K

B-13 MISCELLANEOUS PARK IMPROVEMENTS

These costs assume the trails indicated, general picnic areas, program areas, landscape improvements, land restoration and reforestation.

Approximate Cost: \$200K to \$450K

BROOKWOOD

BR-1 HOUSE/PROGRAM AREA RENOVATION

The house will be renovated to serve as a program facility for both nature and music programming. The specific renovation have not yet been finalized, for the purpose of this estimate, a sq. ft. cost range of \$125 to \$225 has been used. These costs assume landscape improvements in the immediate house environs, a wood gazebo, enhanced paver patio, paths, tree plantings and general site improvements.

Approximate Cost: \$780K to \$1.4M

BR-2 ENTRY DRIVE / PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

These costs assume all new 20-foot wide regular duty asphalt entry drive and parking areas. Costs include modest grading, tree plantings, storm sewers and lighting.

Approximate Cost: \$220K to \$380K

BR-3 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

This assumes the pedestrian bridge will be constructed of wood or metal and cables to minimize the impact on the adjacent vegetation.

Approximate Cost: \$300K to \$700K

BR-4 GENERAL SITE IMPROVEMENTS

These costs assume the development of trails as indicated, general picnic areas, program areas, general landscape and stream access improvements.

Approximate Cost: \$70K to \$190K

BR-5 OVERLOOK/PROGRAM DECK

These costs include an extensive deck along the back of the house. These costs assume a wood structure with benches and portions of overhead trellis.

Approximate Cost: \$60K to \$120K



Nature Nursery's headquarters.



Concept drawing for Fort Miamis.

FALLEN TIMBERS BATTLEFIELD

F-1 HOUSE/PROGRAM AREA RENOVATION

The house will be renovated to serve as a program facility with public restrooms. The specific renovations have not yet been finalized, for the purpose of this estimate, a sq. ft. cost range of \$125 to \$200 has been used. These costs assume improvements in the immediate house environs to create a program staging area: a fire pit, benches, bike racks, drinking fountain, patio, paths, tree plantings and general site improvements. A new asphalt parking area is included. The 24-foot wide drive aisle should be heavy-duty asphalt to accommodate school buses.

Approximate Cost: \$500K to \$1M

F-2 ACCESSIBLE TRAIL AND PROGRAM AREAS

This includes the initial accessible trail loops and three program areas. The trail may be compacted aggregate, portions may require boardwalk to provide ADA access.

Approximate Cost: \$400K to \$875K

F-3 MISCELLANEOUS PARK IMPROVEMENTS

This includes the remaining trail system which is assumed to be primarily designated paths. Additional program areas, tree plantings, limited picnic facilities and general site enhancements are included.

Approximate Cost: \$100K to \$300K

FORT MIAMIS

FM-1 VEHICULAR ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

These costs assume: reinforced turf paver parking areas and a 24-foot wide heavy-duty asphalt drive aisle to accommodate school buses. New signs, split rail fencing, landscaping, benches and general site improvements.

Approximate Cost: \$100K to \$160K

FM-2 BOARDWALK SYSTEM

These costs assume 6-foot wide wood boardwalk system with wire mesh / wood railing system. Several expanded areas of boardwalk with built-in benches.

Approximate Cost: \$60K to \$120K

FM-3 RIVER ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

These costs assume large, generally rectangular blocks of local limestone set along edge of shore line. Two floating metal mesh fishing docks, reinforced, heavy-duty concrete access ramp at end of access street.

Approximate Cost: \$450K to \$800K

FM-4 GENERAL SITE IMPROVEMENTS

These costs include the development of trails as indicated, general picnic areas, program areas, tree plantings and general landscape improvements.

Approximate Cost: \$50K to \$80K

Prerequisites:

Detailed design and allocation of funds are necessary for all improvements. Final design and construction of the proposed improvements may require coordination and review by the National Park Service to maintain the affiliate status.

FUTURE METROPARK (FORMERLY KEIL FARM)

K-1 PONDS AND MASS EARTHWORK

This cost includes the overall earthwork to create the ponds, wetlands, sledding hills and general mounding around the site.

Approximate Cost: \$1.0M to \$1.6M

K-2 ENTRY DRIVE / PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

These costs assume all new 24-foot wide regular duty asphalt entry drive and parking areas. Costs include modest grading, tree plantings, storm sewers and lighting.

Approximate Cost: \$1.3M to \$2.0M

K-3 FARMYARD DAY USE AREA

These costs include renovation of the existing barn, new restrooms, picnic shelter, parking, three fishing docks, tree plantings and general site improvements. The type and extent of renovations of the barn is uncertain at this point. This cost range reflects a renovation cost between \$100 and \$250 per sq. ft. of footprint.

Approximate Cost: \$1.2M to \$2.0M

K-4 DAY USE AREA

These costs include a restroom facility, picnic shelter, general picnic facilities, parking and general site amenities.

Approximate Cost: \$620K to \$1.1M

K-5 GENERAL SITE IMPROVEMENTS

These costs include general trails, a picnic shelter and picnic tables, program areas, and general park enhancements.

Approximate Cost: \$350K to \$600K

Prerequisites:

Land acquisition must occur before many of these improvements can be implemented. Detailed design and allocation of funds are necessary for all improvements. Construction of the pond embankments and wetlands may require coordination and approval of Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the United State Army Corps of Engineers. Additionally, any improvements within the 33-acre southeastern section of the property acquired with NOAA grant funds must be approved in advance by the granting agency.



Concept drawing for Keil Farm.



Concept drawing for Oak Openings Corridor.

OAK OPENINGS CORRIDOR (North Zone)

O-1 EBER ROAD DAY USE AREA

A day-use area would be created with restroom facilities, two picnic shelters, general picnic facilities, fishing dock, trails and general site amenities. Parking and vehicular access would be aggregate. Primitive camping may be accommodated with four or five primitive camping sites consisting of a cleared area with a picnic table, charcoal grill and fire ring. The higher cost range reflects the provision of primitive camping shelters or yurts. These costs assume modest earthwork and do not anticipate any site lighting or storm sewers.

Approximate Cost: \$440K to \$735K

O-2 WECKERLY ROAD DAY USE AREA

A day-use area would be created with restroom facilities, a picnic shelter, general picnic facilities, trails and general site amenities. Parking and vehicular access would be aggregate with no site lighting or storm sewers anticipated. These costs assume modest earthwork.

Approximate Cost: \$275K to \$425K

O-3 NORTH TRAIL LINKS

Provide a continuous path connection between Secor Metropark and the Eber Road day use area through Irwin Prairie State Nature Preserve. Much of this area is comprised of wetlands and the precise route is uncertain. These costs assume 7,000 linear feet of trail with one third of that length being wood or metal mesh boardwalk and two thirds of that length being compacted aggregate surface.

Approximate Cost: \$680K to \$1.0M

Prerequisites:

Most of these improvements can commence once detailed design is completed and funds allocated. The north trail linkage will require land acquisition or agreements with adjacent property owners. Additionally, multiple properties acquired by Metroparks south of Dorr Street and north of Frankfort Road are encumbered by Environmental Covenants held by Ohio EPA. Ohio EPA approval must be obtained prior to initiating trail development within these areas.

OAK OPENINGS CORRIDOR (South Zone)

O-4 SOUTH TRAIL LINKS

Provide a continuous path connection between the Weckerly Road day use area and Crissey Road; and between the Weckerly Road day use area and the Wabash Cannonball Trail. The precise route is uncertain. These costs assume 10,000 linear feet of trail with one half of that length being wood or metal mesh boardwalk. The remaining portions will be light-duty asphalt pavement. Evaluate options for bicycle connections/use from the Wabash Cannonball Trail.

Approximate Cost: \$950K to \$1.8M

O-5 SOUTH TRAIL LINKS

This area presents a good opportunity for more intensive improvements. A day-use area would be created with restroom facilities, trails and general site amenities. Parking would be regular-duty asphalt pavement; the entry drive shall be 24-foot wide heavy-duty asphalt pavement. A pond / wetland complex would be created to assist in regional stormwater management and to provide recreational amenities and enhanced wildlife habitat.

Approximate Cost: \$895K to \$1.46M



METROPARKS OF THE TOLEDO AREA

THE FUTURE



metroparks
TOLEDO AREA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	1
AGENCY OVERVIEW	1
PARALLEL PLANNING EFFORTS.....	3
THE FUTURE PLAN ORGANIZATION	4
CHAPTER 2 - TOLEDO, THE REGION AND METROPARKS	5
REGIONAL CONTEXT	6
NATURAL HISTORY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS.....	7
LAND COVER AND LAND USE	16
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS.....	17
EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	19
METROPARKS OF THE TOLEDO AREA AND TRAIL SYSTEMS	21
CHAPTER 3 - TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES.....	37
REGIONAL ECONOMIC TRENDS.....	38
NATIONAL PARK AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCE TRENDS.....	39
2013 METROPARKS NEEDS ASSESSMENT	40
CONCLUSIONS: THE OPPORTUNITIES	41
CHAPTER 4 - THE PLAN - A VISION FOR THE FUTURE	43
A RENEWED PERSPECTIVE.....	44
DISTRICTWIDE GUIDELINES	45
DEFINING DISTRICTS – A NEW CONTEXT FOR PLANNING	49
Appendix A - Existing Conditions Maps	67
Appendix B - Maps of Existing and Emerging Parks	77

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION



Farnsworth Metropark sunset

The purpose of the *Metroparks of the Toledo Area, Future Plan* is to establish a broad based, county-wide vision for the park system. The vision focuses on establishing a system-wide framework to help guide and inform decision making with respect to:

- Parkland and open space connectivity
- Natural resource preservation and restoration
- Land acquisition and protection, and
- Key partnerships needed to support the county-wide vision

As such, the *Future Plan* will serve as a conceptual level blueprint designed to establish a truly integrated regional park system that enhances the quality of life of Lucas County residents, and strengthens the national image or “brand” of the greater Toledo area.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Metroparks of the Toledo Area (Metroparks) is a regional system of parks and greenways preserving internationally significant natural areas and historical sites, primarily in Lucas County, Ohio. In 2012, the park system accommodated over 2.8 million visitors.

Metroparks was formed in 1928 as a special district under the Ohio Revised Code. The park district is governed by a three-member, volunteer Board of Park Commissioners appointed by the Lucas County probate court judge.

The district is currently funded by two tax levies of 1.4 and 0.9 mills, with additional revenue from the Ohio Local Government Fund, grants, donations and fees. During the past 10 years, the district has acquired land holdings totaling more than 3,500 acres – more than in any similar period in its history. The additional acreage was acquired with funding from a 0.3 mill 10 year levy that expired at the end of 2012 with additional funding from state and federal grants. With current landholdings at more than 11,000 acres (shown on Figure 1-1) and funding from the 0.9 mill levy passed in 2012, Metroparks is positioned to open additional parks and greenways.

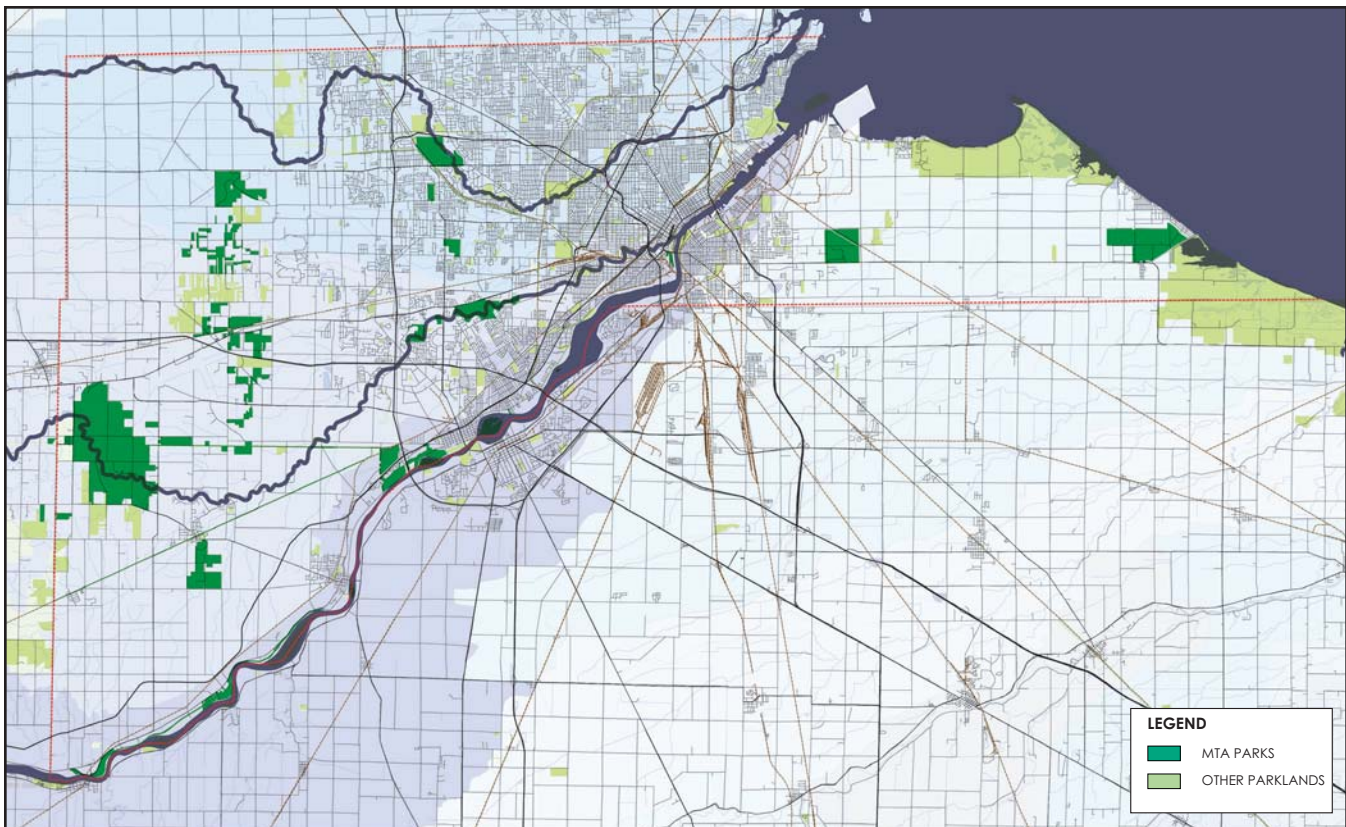


Figure 1-1. Existing Metroparks Land Holdings

The park district preserves natural areas in the Toledo area within three distinct ecoregions:

- The Oak Openings Region of western Lucas County
- The central river corridors of the Maumee River, Ottawa River / Ten-mile Creek, and Swan Creek
- The eastern lake plains of Lake Erie's Maumee Bay

The park system currently includes nine parks, open daily, free of charge, from 7:00 a.m. until dark. The parks include:

- Wildwood Preserve, Sylvania Township
- Secor, Richfield and Sylvania Townships
- Oak Openings Preserve, Swanton Township
- Pearson, Oregon
- Swan Creek Preserve, Toledo
- Side Cut, Maumee
- Farnsworth, Waterville
- Bend View, Waterville
- Providence, Providence Township
- Ft. Miamis, Maumee

The park district is the managing partner of two regional paved trails:

- The Wabash Cannonball Trail (north and south forks)
- The University / Parks Trail

Other parklands and preserved natural areas not yet opened to the public include:

- Future Metropark (former Keil Farm), Toledo
- Howard Farms, Jerusalem Township
- Middlegrounds, Toledo
- Oak Openings Corridor, Townships of Monclova, Harding, Spencer, Springfield, and Swanton
- Brookwood / Swan Creek Corridor, Toledo
- Blue Creek Metropark (formerly Blue Creek Conservation Area), Whitehouse and Waterville Township
- Fallen Timbers Battlefield*, Maumee and Monclova Township

**Part of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis National Historic Site, an affiliate unit of the National Park Service.*

Toledo Botanical Garden is a public / private partnership between Metroparks of the Toledo Area and the non-profit Toledo Botanical Garden Board, Inc. in collaboration with the City of Toledo.

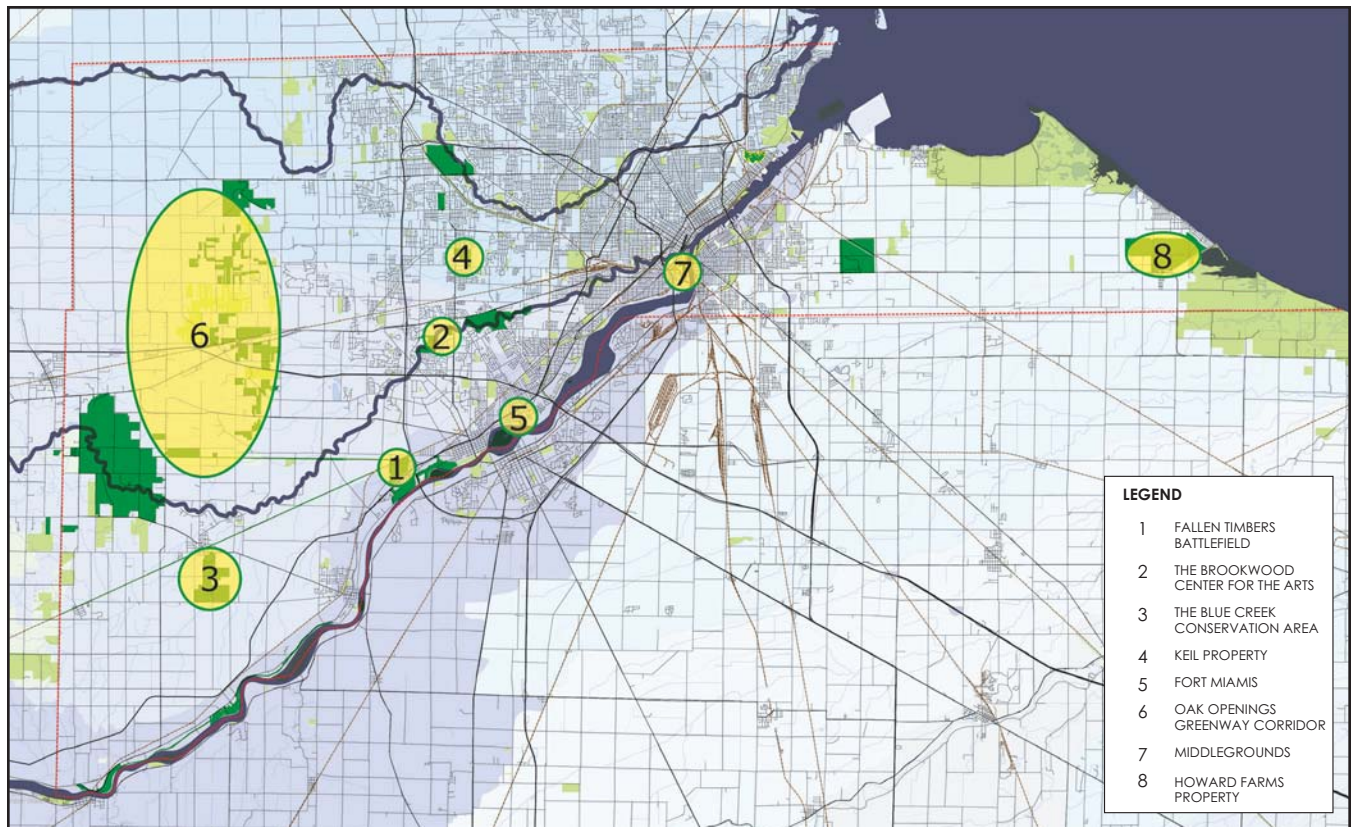


Figure 1-2. Emerging Parks

PARALLEL PLANNING EFFORTS

This *Future Plan* is one of three integrated planning components or ‘volumes’ to be used to guide the Metroparks organization for a minimum of 20 years. Volume II of the Metroparks Comprehensive Plan is the *Tomorrow Plan* which includes a set of site specific conceptual master plans for landholdings considered priority areas for park development (see Figure 1-2. Emerging Parks). The properties for which site specific conceptual plans have been developed include:

- Blue Creek Metropark
- Brookwood / Swan Creek Corridor
- Fallen Timbers Battlefield / Fort Miamis
- Future Metropark (former Keil Farm)
- Oak Openings Corridor

A summary description of these properties is included in Chapter 2 of this *Plan*. Planning efforts for two other projects, Middlegrounds and Howard Farms, were advanced in addition to and outside of the current planning process. These are also included in the “Emerging Parks” section of Chapter 2 of this *Future Plan*.

The *Today Plan*, or Volume I, of the Metroparks Comprehensive Plan is a System-Wide Service Delivery / Sustainability and Systems Analysis Plan. This component presents operational, staffing, and service delivery assessments to ensure the cohesion of the system-wide and site specific plans and ensure effective and efficient service delivery that exceeds the expectations of Lucas County residents.

While each plan component has been prepared as a separate document, critical aspects of both the site specific plans and the system-wide service delivery / sustainability and system analysis plan are reflected in Chapter 2 of this *Future Plan*.



FUTURE PLAN ORGANIZATION

The *Future Plan* is organized into four major chapters:

1. This first chapter identifies the purpose and objectives of the Strategic Plan, summarizes system and agency characteristics of Metroparks of the Toledo Area, and describes additional planning components integral to the Strategic Plan.
2. The second chapter describes both the regional and local context within which Metroparks has grown, and elaborates on the park system's history and current attributes.
3. The third chapter focuses on trends, needs and opportunities that influence and shape the vision for Metroparks' future described in the fourth chapter of this *Future Plan*.
4. The context defined in the second chapter, along with the trends, needs and opportunities identified in the third chapter, combine to inform

a vision for the future of Metroparks. This vision is presented in the fourth chapter of the *Future Plan* and consists of both countywide (district wide) recommendations and recommendations that apply to designated districts established in this plan. These districts are aligned with Lucas County's three distinct ecoregions: 1) the Oak Openings Region of western Lucas County; 2) the central stream corridors of the Maumee River, Swan Creek, and the Ottawa River and; 3) the eastern coastal plains of Lake Erie's Maumee Bay. These districts also reflect the unique attributes of areas across the urban to rural fabric of the county.

Larger Versions of selected mapping included in Chapters 1-3 are included in Appendix A - Existing Conditions and Appendix B - Existing and Emerging Parks.

CHAPTER 2 – TOLEDO, THE REGION AND METROPARKS



Egrets at Weirs Rapids

It is critical to view this *Future Plan* within the broadest possible context to assure that the plan: 1) reflects the natural, cultural and economic history of the Greater Toledo Area and the Great Lakes Region, 2) realistically acknowledges current development characteristics of the region, and 3) takes full advantage of, and reflect the potential that this region and its natural assets offer.

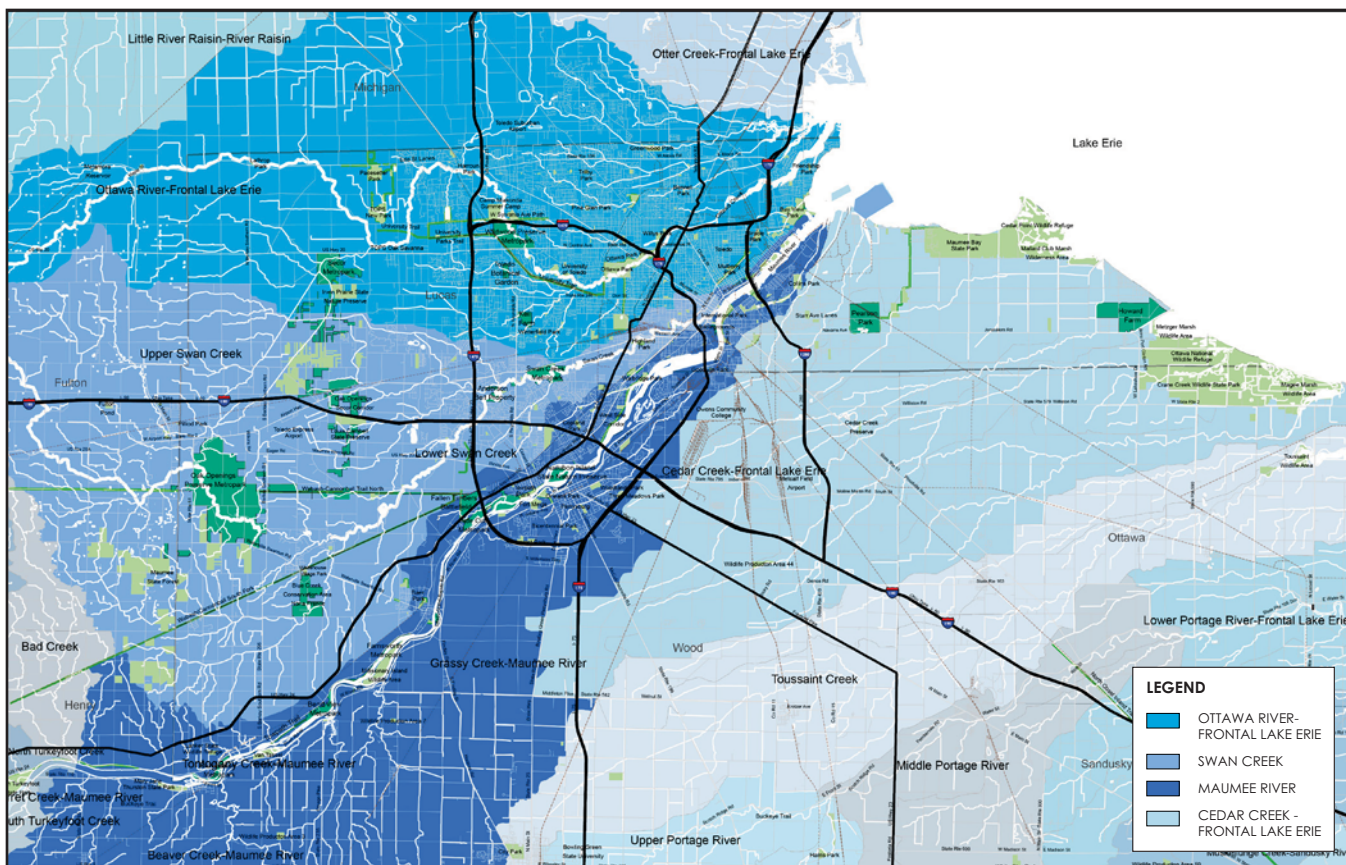


Figure 2-1. Watersheds. (Source: U.S. Geological Survey Hydrologic Unit Maps)

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Metroparks' park district and Lucas County are located primarily within the Maumee River Watershed and smaller watersheds that drain directly into Lake Erie. A watershed is an area of land where surface water from rain and melting snow or ice converges to a single point at a lower elevation such as a river or lake. The Maumee River Watershed (see Figure 2-1. Watersheds of the Toledo area) is the largest watershed in the Great Lakes Basin, encompassing over 8,300 square miles of land in Northwest Ohio, portions of Indiana, and Southeast Michigan. In Northwest Ohio, the watershed drains 5,024 square miles.

This geographic reality is highly significant, because the Great Lakes are the largest system of fresh surface water on earth. They contain over 21% of the world's fresh surface water supply and 84% of North America's fresh water supply. The Great Lakes Basin is home to 25 million people in the United States, and 8.5 million people in Canada. About 10% of the US Population and 31% of the Canadian population live within the Great Lakes Basin. According to the Brookings Institute, if it stood alone as a country, the economy of the Great Lakes Region would be one of the largest economic units on earth – with a \$4.5 trillion gross regional product.

The Maumee River Watershed, the Ottawa River Watershed, Lake Erie, and their location in the Great Lakes Basin have, to a large degree, defined the natural heritage of the Greater Toledo Area. It is a premise of this *Future Plan* that the Maumee River, Swan Creek, the Ottawa River, the Oak Openings Region, and the eastern Lake Plain of Lake Erie's Maumee Bay will continue to assert a defining influence on Lucas County as its most valued recreational and open space resources.

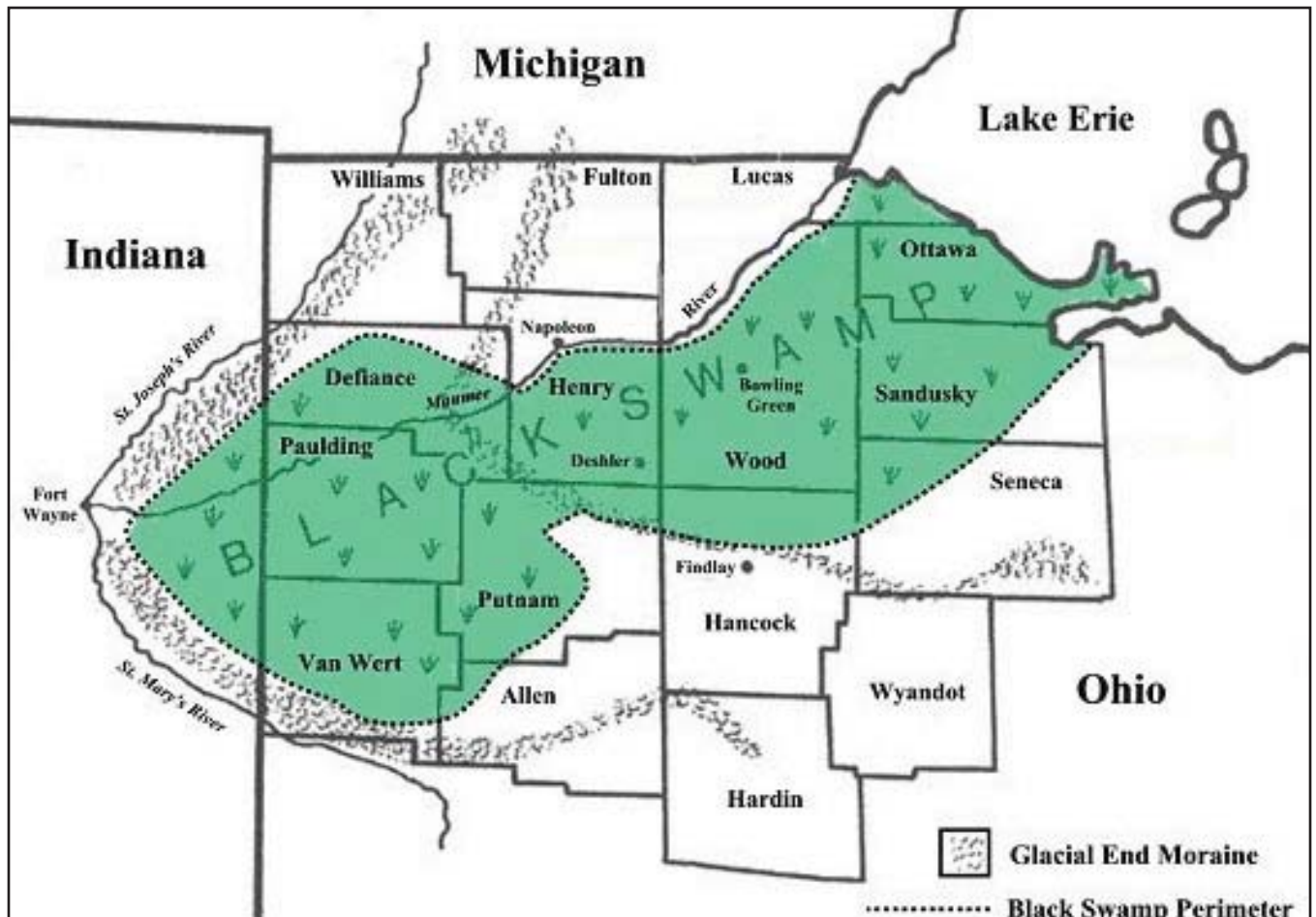


Figure 2-2. Great Black Swamp Area. (Source: <http://www.historicperrysburg.org/blackswamp.htm>)

NATURAL HISTORY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

THE GREAT BLACK SWAMP

The Great Black Swamp, which once covered approximately 1,500 square miles in northwest Ohio and northeastern Indiana, formed as a result of the Wisconsin Glacier covering the land about 20,000 years ago (see Figure 2-2. Great Black Swamp Area). When the glacier retreated approximately 10,000 years ago, it left a flattened surface covered with impermeable clay. Sand ridges were left behind that separated certain areas of the swamp from each other, and provided some higher ground. The area was also covered with dense forests. When the leaves from the trees and other plant material fell into the water, they decomposed and the water turned black. Thus the swamp became the Great Black Swamp.

Settlers traveling through Ohio in the early 1800's traveled on the fringes of the swamp, or went completely out of their way to avoid going through it. The Great Black Swamp, in fact, was the last area in Ohio to be settled.

By the 1830's settlers started to trickle into the area and as their numbers grew, they worked to clear and drain the land. As a result, the draining of the swamp proceeded at a rapid pace, and by 1900, agriculture had eliminated 95% of the swamp forests in northwest Ohio.



Dunes within Oak Openings Preserve.

THE OAK OPENINGS REGION

The most notable example of the sand ridges left by the receding glaciers is the Oak Openings (see Figure 2-3. Oak Openings Region). The Oak Openings Region of Northwest Ohio is a globally recognized rare ecosystem declared by the Nature Conservancy as “One of America’s Last Great Places.” The name Oak Openings comes from early settlers who, after struggling through the great Black Swamp on their way west, welcomed the higher open ground they called the “Oak Openings.”

The Oak Openings Region is located in the western portion of Lucas County, stretching into portions of Fulton and Henry counties at the south end. To the north it extends into Southeast Michigan, reaching nearly to Detroit. It is a band of sandy soil that is over 50 miles long and varies from six to 10 miles wide where the sand varies anywhere from a few inches to 20 feet in depth. Beneath the sand is a thick layer of clay that water cannot penetrate. As a result, the entire Oak Openings Region alternately transitions from dry sandy areas to swamp forest or wet prairie.

The Oak Openings is home to more endangered native plant species than any other place of similar size in Ohio, and more than one-third of all Ohio’s rare plant and animal species can be found here.

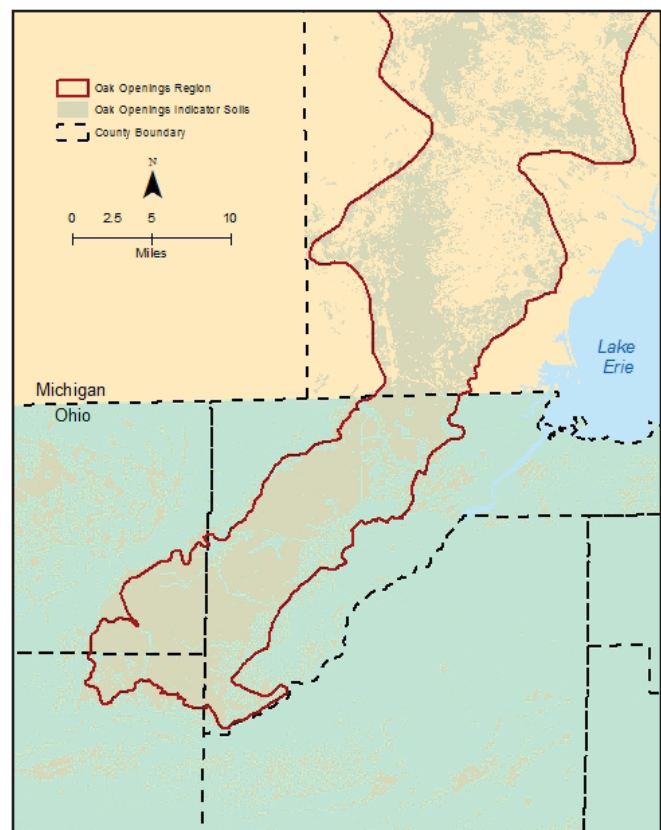


Figure 2-3. Oak Openings in relation to Ohio counties and Michigan. (Sources: MPDPA, ESRI, Brewer & Vankat, Lucas, Fulton, Henry, Wood & Monroe County)

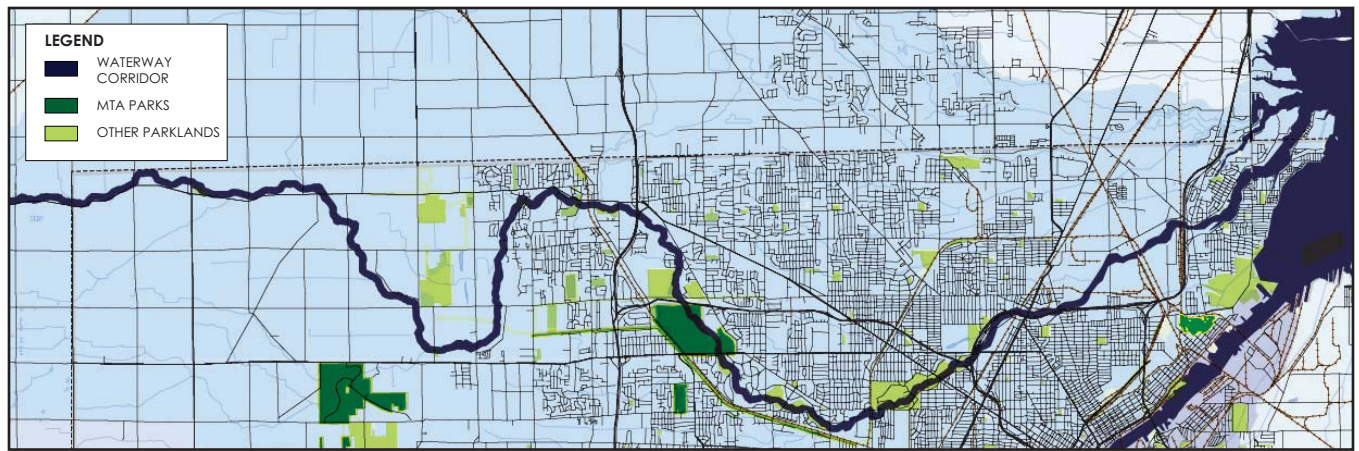


Figure 2-4. Ottawa River in relationship to surrounding municipalities and park lands

WATER RESOURCES

As noted earlier, all of Lucas County and its Metroparks lie within the Lake Erie Watershed, primarily in the Maumee and Ottawa River watersheds, while the eastern portions of the County drain directly into Lake Erie.

THE OTTAWA RIVER

The Ottawa River and its 170 square mile watershed (approximately one-third of which includes drainage areas in southeast Michigan) (see Figure 2-4) flows to Lake Erie near the northern border of Lucas County. The upstream Tenmile Creek reach, from the headwaters to the City of Sylvania, has a stable channel with low banks and indistinct valleys and floodplains. Agricultural uses dominate this relatively flat portion of the river. The lower reaches are dominated by a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial areas, with industrial uses dominating the landscape in the City of Toledo. Several significant parks are located on the Ottawa River and its tributaries including Metroparks' 493-acre Wildwood Preserve in Sylvania Township and numerous other public parks including 312-acre Ottawa Park in the City of Toledo.



Wildwood Preserve Metropark



Area of Ottawa River near Jeep plant

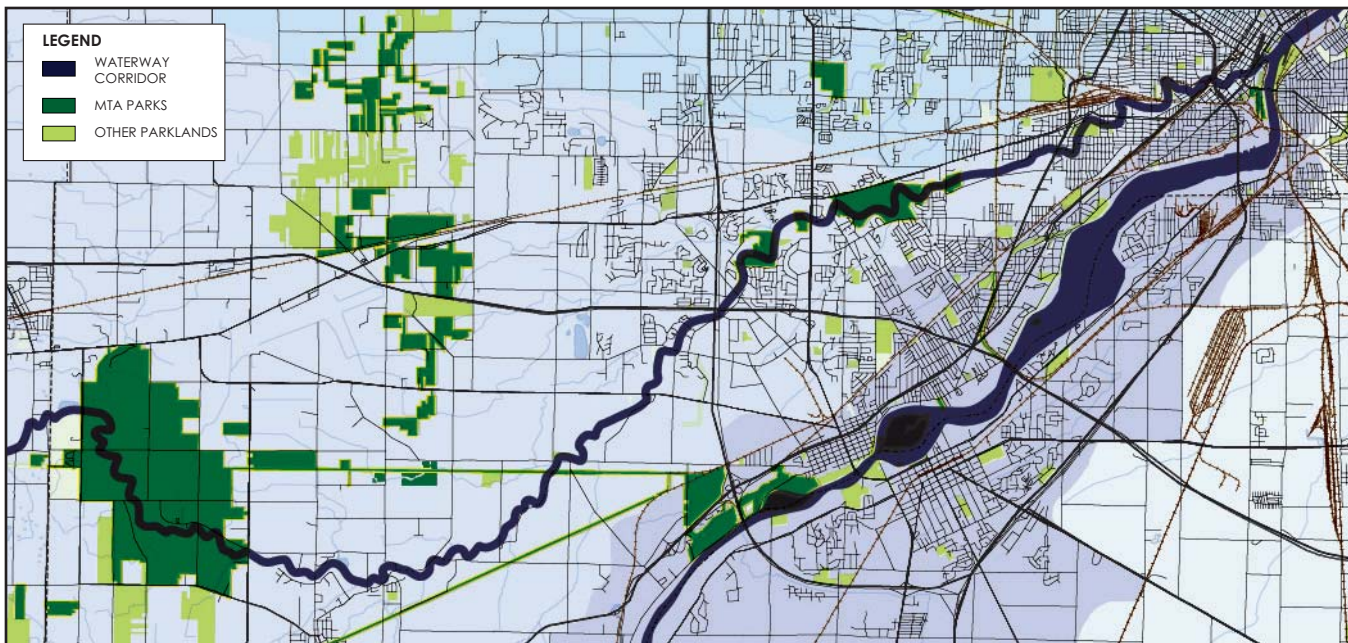


Figure 2-5. Swan Creek relationship to surrounding municipalities and park lands

SWAN CREEK

Swan Creek has its headwaters in Fulton County, northwest of Swanton Village. It flows through Metroparks' Oak Openings Preserve and Swan Creek Preserve, continuing east, where its lower reaches run through the southern portion of the City of Toledo until joining the Maumee River in downtown Toledo (see Figure 2-5. Swan Creek). It drains a 204 square mile sub-watershed within the Maumee River watershed, and an estimated 49,000 citizens reside in the Swan Creek watershed year round. The Village of Swanton, with nearly 3,500 people, draws drinking water from Swan Creek. Overall, land use in the Swan Creek watershed is 55 percent row crop and pasture land, 21 percent urban / residential, and 18 percent natural areas including forests, savannas and prairies.



Swan Creek

THE MAUMEE RIVER

The Maumee River is formed at Ft. Wayne Indiana by the confluence of the St. Joseph and St. Mary's Rivers and flows northeastward for a distance of 137 miles to Lake Erie's Maumee Bay on the City of Toledo's lakefront (see Figure 2-6. Maumee River). The banks of the Maumee are the focus of Metroparks' largest linear concentration of parklands. Extending downstream from the southwest corner of Lucas County, are Providence, Bend View, Farnsworth and Sidecut Metroparks, and the future Middlegrounds Metropark near downtown Toledo. Other significant parks and preserves, again extending downstream from the southwest corner of the county along the Maumee River, include: Van Tassel Wildlife Area, Missionary Island Wildlife Area, Waterworks Park, Buttonwood – Betty C. Black Recreation Area, Orleans Park, Audubon Islands Nature Preserve, Fort Miamis Metropark, Walbridge Park, International Park, Promenade Park, and Bayview Park.

The Maumee forms the 32-mile southern border of Lucas County from its western border with Henry County to Corbutt Island and the City of Rossford in Wood County. The mouth of the river at Lake Erie is wide and supports high volumes of commercial ship traffic, with cargos that include oil, grain, and coal. About 12 miles upstream, in the vicinity of Audubon Islands Nature Preserve, the river becomes much shallower and supports only recreational navigation above that point.

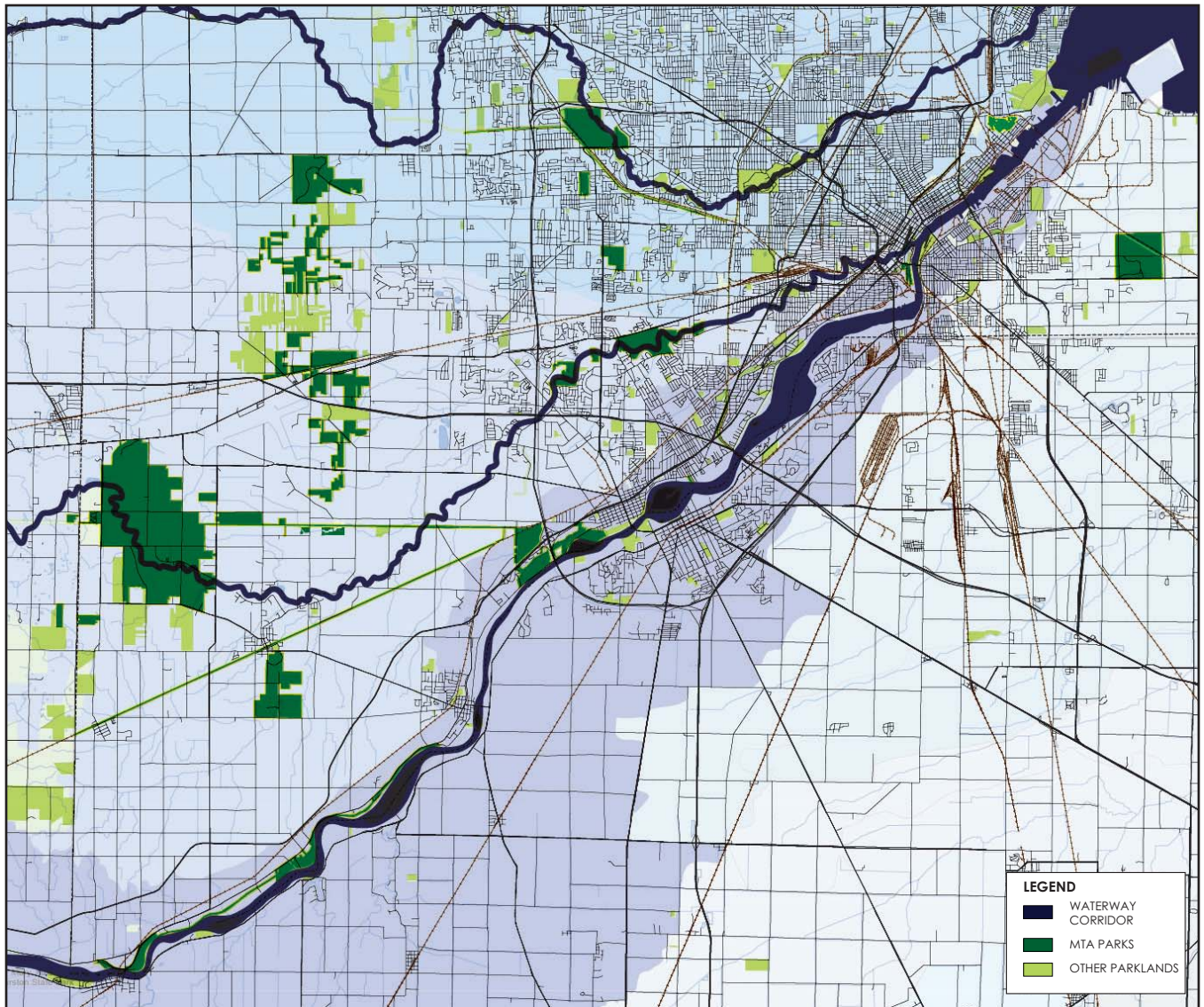


Figure 2-6. Maumee River in relationship to surrounding municipalities and park lands

In the spring of each year, the annual walleye run up the Maumee River is one of the largest migrations of river bound walleyes east of the Mississippi. According to University of Toledo's Lake Erie Center, an estimated half million walleye migrate from Lake Erie into the Maumee River to spawn each year. Walleye come to spawn from the western end of Lake Erie, and the most popular method of fishing for the migrating walleye is by wading out into the river and casting.

As noted earlier, The Maumee River watershed is the largest watershed in the Great Lakes Basin and much of Lucas County's natural, cultural and commercial heritage is linked to the river.



Walleye fishing on Maumee River

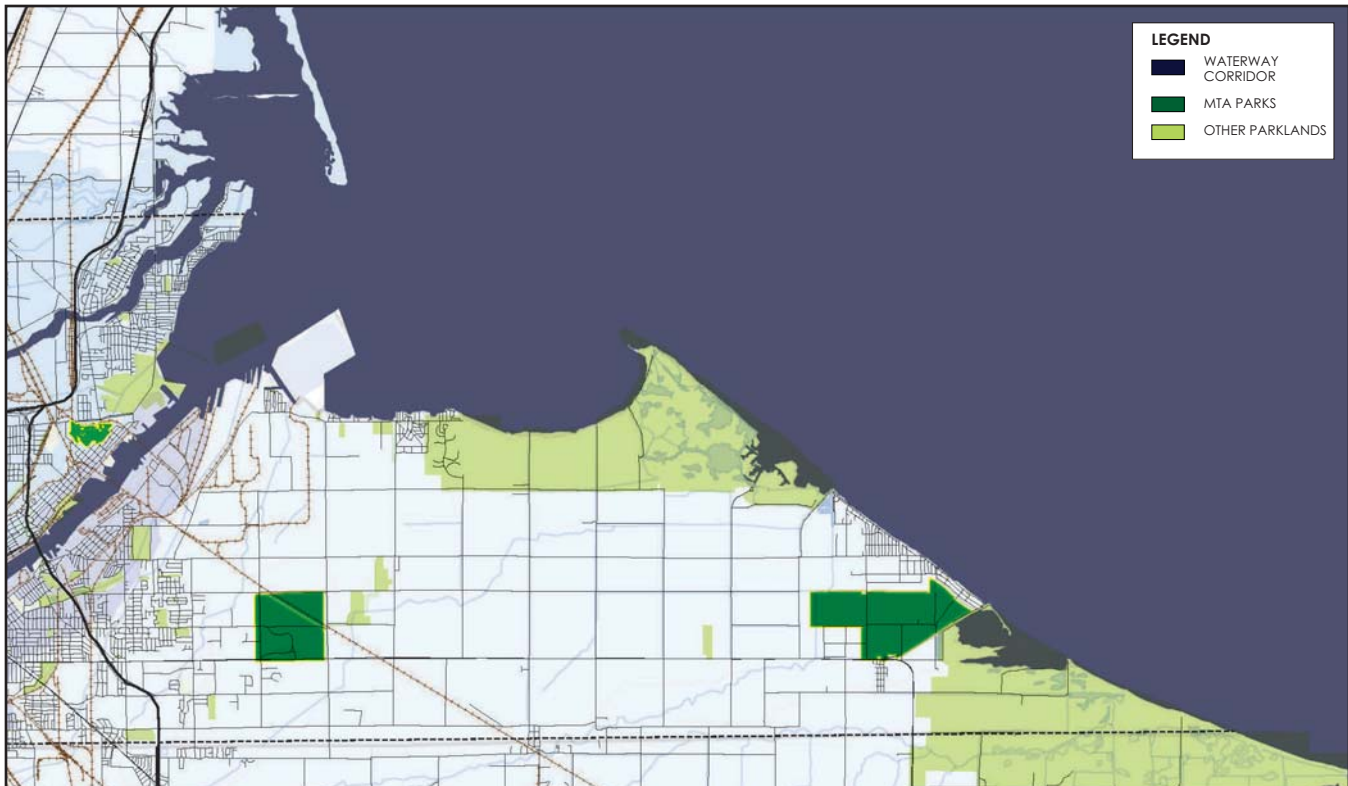


Figure 2-7. Maumee Bay and the Eastern Lake Plain

MAUMEE BAY AND THE EASTERN COASTAL PLAINS

In addition to two major rivers and Swan Creek, Lake Erie's Maumee Bay and the rural coastal areas to the east, define Lucas County's unique waterfront presence on the Great Lakes (see Figure 2-7. Maumee Bay and the Easter Lake Plain). At the mouth of the Maumee River, the waters of Lake Erie and Maumee Bay reflect the commercial characteristics of a major lake port. To the east, the low lying Lake Erie shoreline and adjacent coastal marshes are home to over 8,500 acres of outdoor recreational resources and wildlife refuge areas. These include Maumee Bay State Park, Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge, Mallard Club Marsh Wildlife Area, Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, and Magee Marsh Wildlife Area.



Maumee Bay State Park



Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area



Magee Marsh Wildlife Area

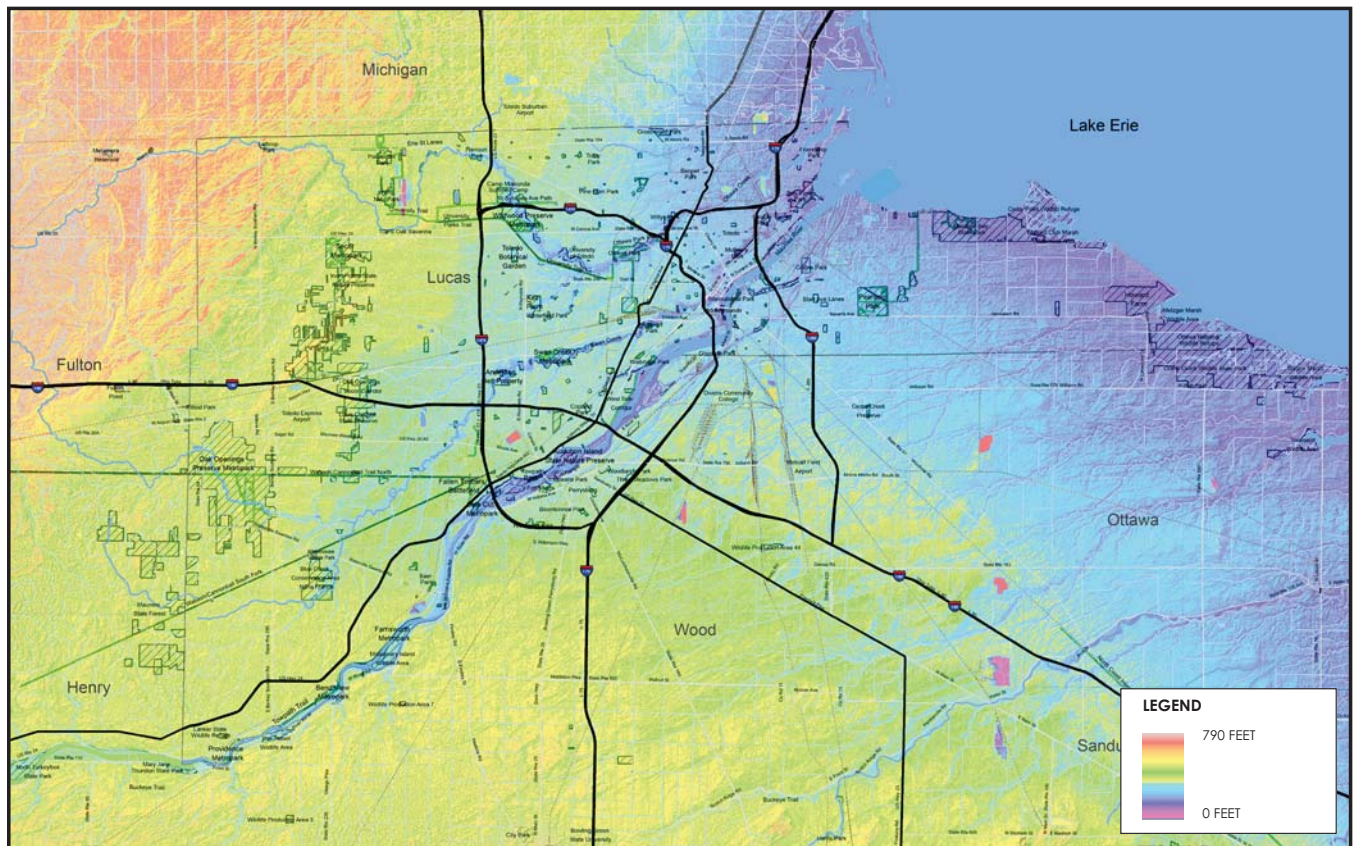


Figure 2-8. Topography of Toledo Area. (Source: 2013 National Elevation Dataset Census Data: Census. Gov 2010 Census Data)

INLAND LAKES AND WETLANDS

In Lucas County, other than farm ponds, there are relatively few natural or manmade lakes. Exceptions include several lakes and ponds that have formed at abandoned quarry sites. These include the Nona France quarry pond at Blue Creek Metropark and quarry sites in Monclova and Springfield Townships that function as private recreational lakes, serving as the focal point of higher density residential subdivisions.

Despite the extremely flat terrain of Northwest Ohio (see Figure 2-8 Topography) and the historic extent of the Great Black Swamp, agricultural use has eliminated most jurisdictional wetlands in Lucas County. Those that remain (see Figure 2-9. Wetlands and 100 year flood limits) are concentrated in the Oak Openings region in western Lucas County, along the Maumee River, and within the low lying marshlands of eastern Lucas County.



Irwin Prairie, Grass Lake



Blue Creek Conservation Area wetland

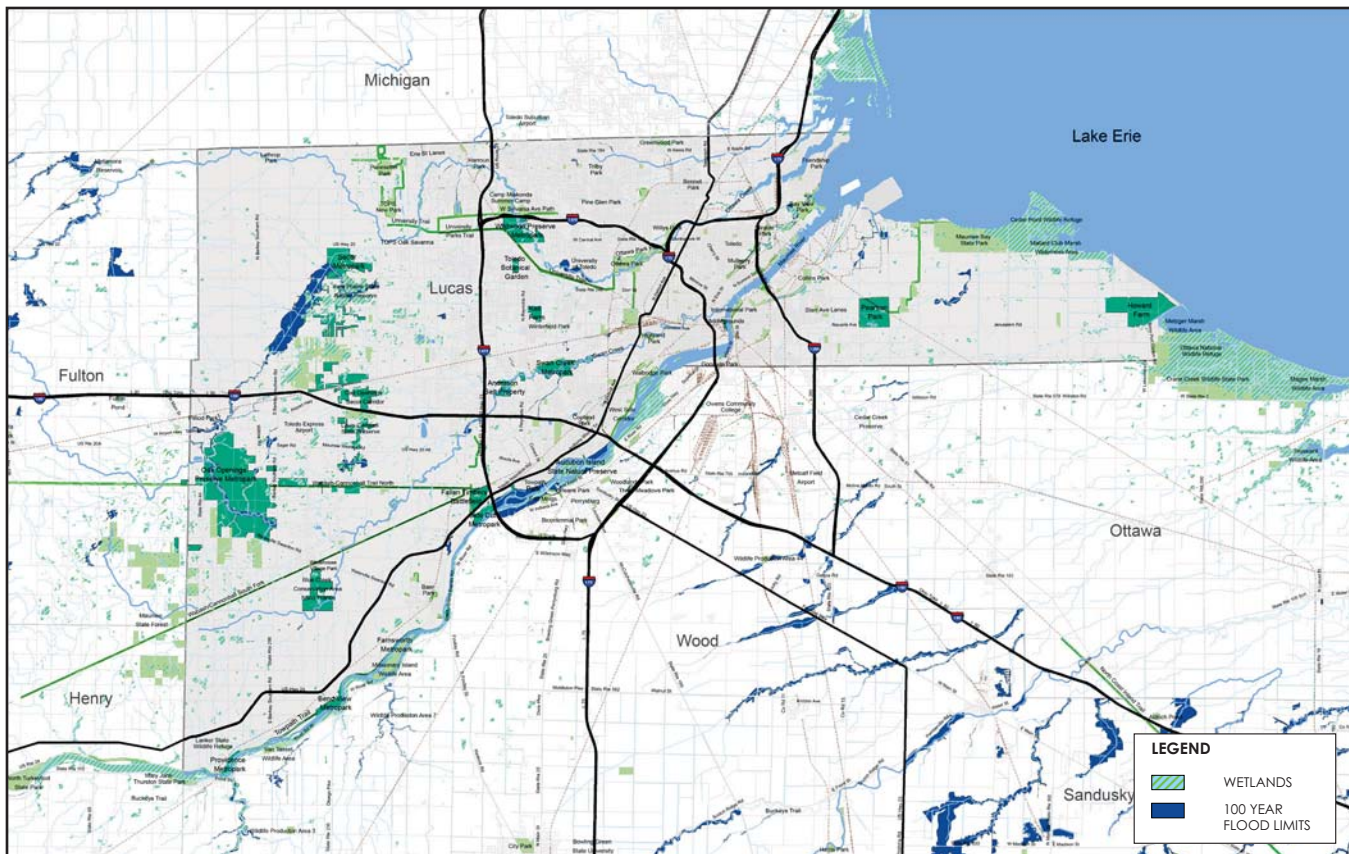


Figure 2-9. Regional wetlands and 100 year flood plain limits. (Source: NWI and 2011 FEMA)

FISH AND WILDLIFE

RECREATIONAL FISHING AND FISH POPULATIONS

Western Lake Erie, and specifically, Maumee Bay, contains the shallowest, warmest, and most biologically productive waters in the Great Lakes. The Maumee River and Maumee Bay are nationally recognized by sport fishermen for their abundant Walleye, Lake Erie Perch, White Bass and pan fish populations. The greatest challenge to fisheries in the Western Lake Erie Basin is tied to water quality and land use. The Maumee River Watershed — an 8.3 million-acre expanse of mostly upstream farmland, eventually feeds the Maumee River and Maumee Bay. The area has entered the national spotlight in recent years due to nutrient runoff and sedimentation — and the consequential harmful algae blooms (HAB).

When overly abundant, these algae have a negative impact on the fish populations and plant life in the lake and threaten drinking water supplies and tourism.



Walleye fishing in the Maumee Bay

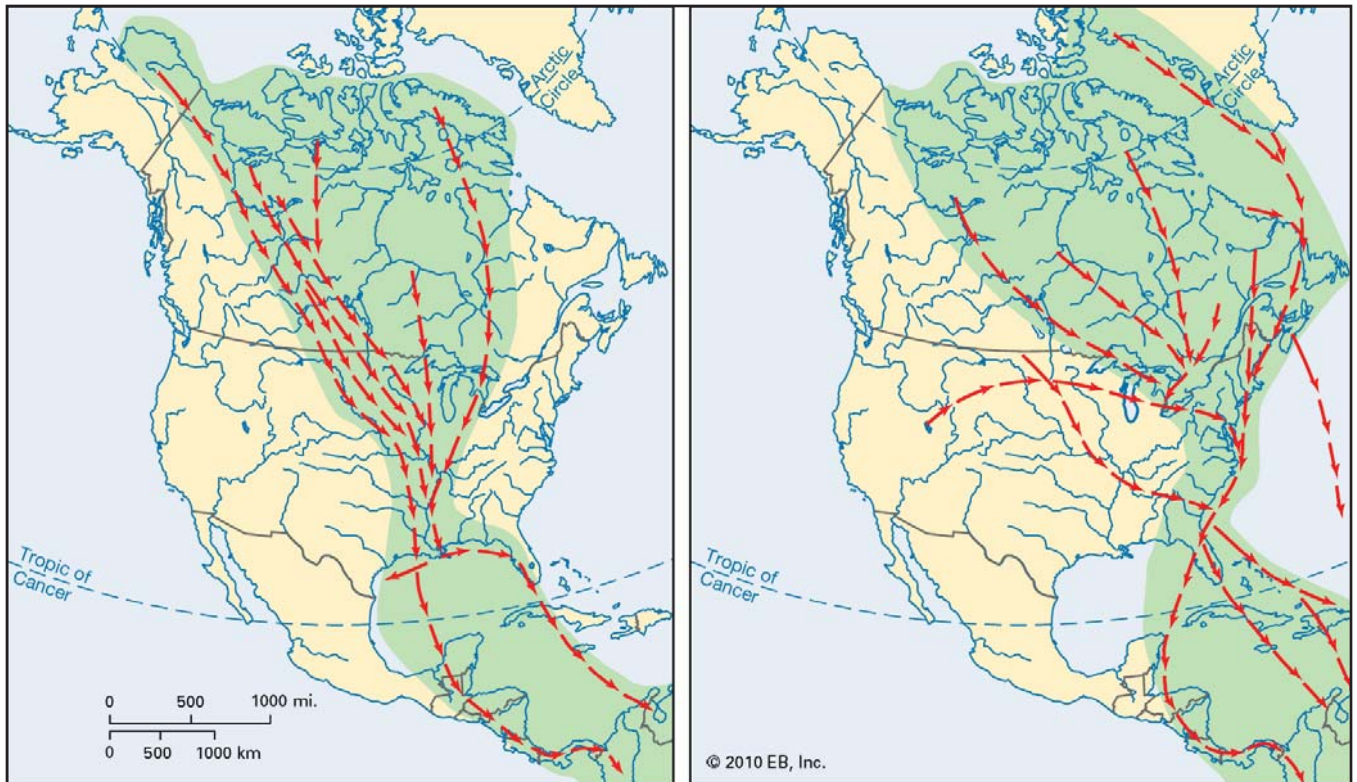


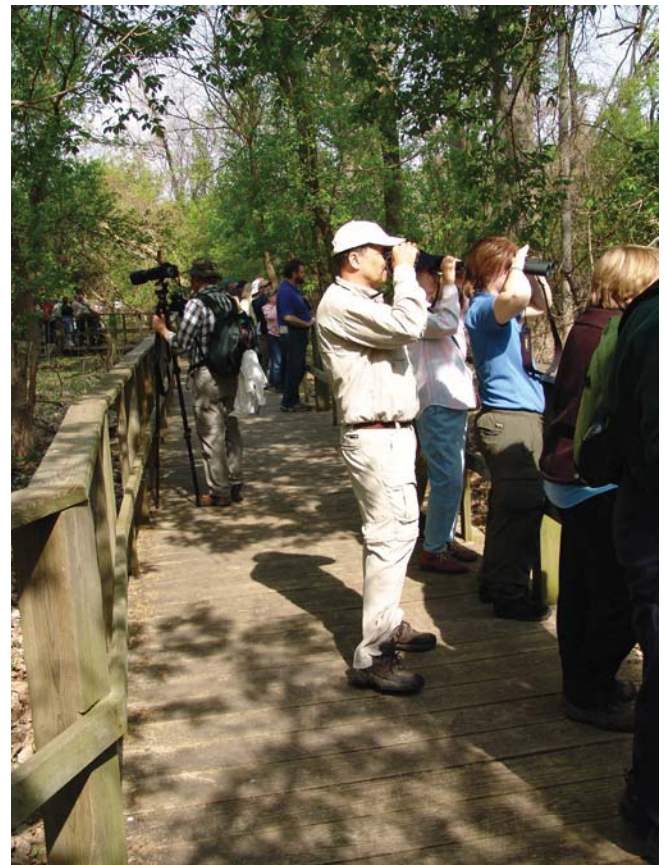
Figure 2-10. Bird migration. (Source: flyway: Mississippi and Atlantic flyways. Map/Still. Britannica Online for Kids. Web.11 June 2014. <http://kids.britannica.com/comptons/art-143129>)

MIGRATORY BIRDS AND BIRDING

Lucas County and neighboring Ottawa and Erie Counties are among the most significant birding areas in the United States (see Figure 2-10. Bird migration). The Oak Openings, Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and Magee Marsh Wildlife Area combine to host more than 300 species that are identifiable during the spring migration. Magee Marsh covers about 2,000 acres and provides critical stopover habitat for migrating birds and functions like a giant rest stop where birds can rest and refuel before continuing on their journey.

Ohio Department of Natural Resources' avian education specialist Jim McCormac notes that there are more rare species in the Oak Openings, a hot spot of bird biodiversity, than anywhere else in Ohio, attracting about 136 of the approximately 180 species that nest in Ohio.

The significance of recreational fishing and birding in northwest Ohio is amplified by the fact that they are not only regional attractions, but also natural resource based assets that are valued at a national level, reinforcing the importance of Metroparks' ongoing stewardship and conservation role within the region.



Birding at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area

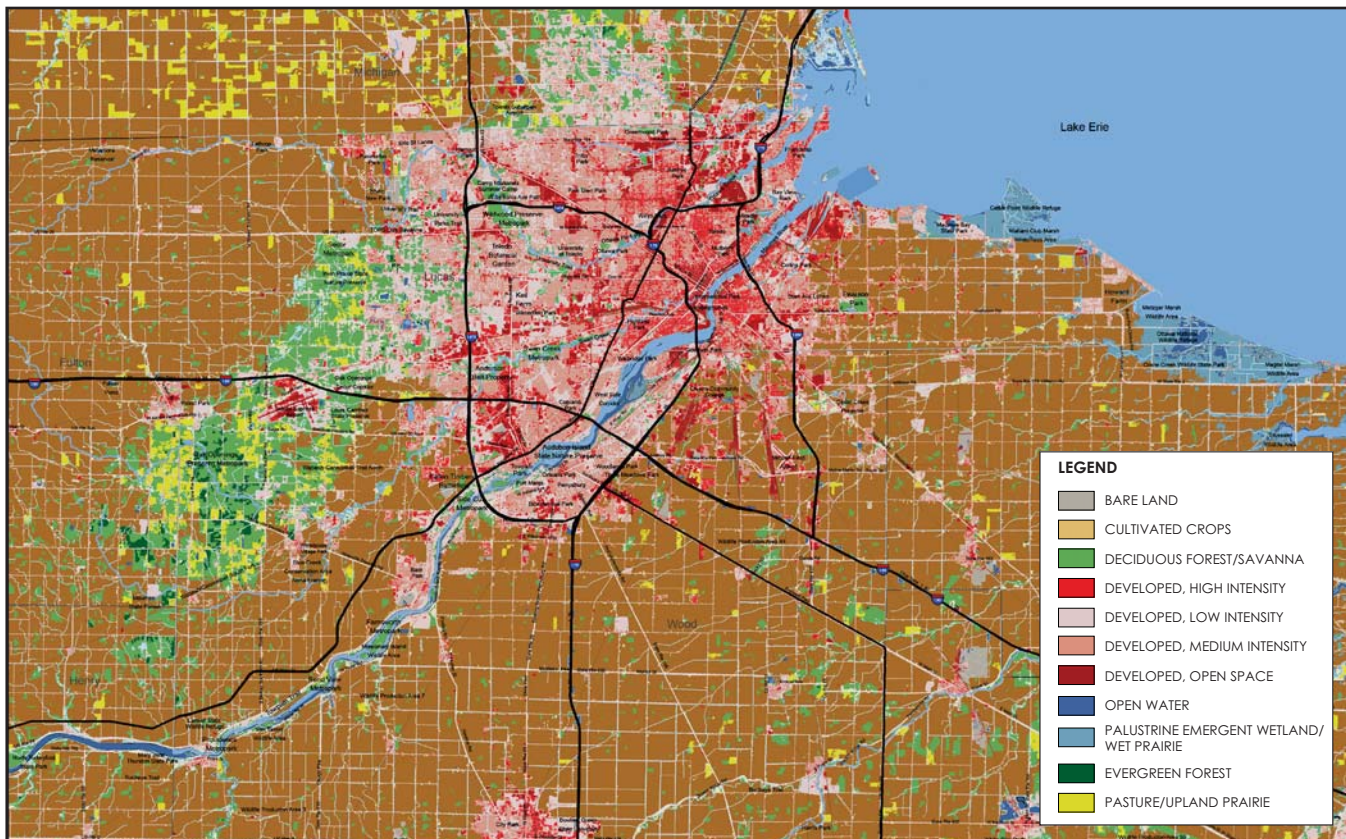


Figure 2-11. Land cover of the Toledo area. (Source: 2010 National Landcover Data Set)

LAND COVER AND LAND USE

The land cover map displayed in Figure 2-11 clearly shows the distribution of development densities and land cover characteristics across Lucas County. Several unique patterns emerge, including:

- The centrality of higher intensity development within the City of Toledo's boundaries and along the southern bank of the Maumee River, in the city of Oregon.
- The general concentration of developed land within and adjacent to the I-75/I-475 Interstate highway loop that surrounds the City of Toledo, with clear evidence of suburban sprawl to the west of I-475, particularly into Springfield and Monclova Townships.
- The dominance of the remaining undeveloped portions of the Oak Openings Region extending from the southern border of Sylvania Township, to the south and west in Spencer, Harding, Springfield, Monclova, and Swanton townships.
- The relatively high percentage of land devoted to cropland, pasture and natural areas for an urbanized county.

Statistically, over 40% of Lucas County's land cover is devoted to the cultivation of crops and pasture land, and over 25.9% of the County's land area consists of forests, wetlands, grasslands, open water and developed open space (mostly managed grasses or low-lying vegetation planted in developed areas for recreation, erosion control, or aesthetic purposes).

Within the remaining areas of the County, high intensity development, which includes heavily built-up urban centers and large constructed surfaces in suburban areas with a variety of land uses, make up approximately 4.7% of the county's land area. Medium intensity development, which commonly includes multi- and single-family housing areas, in suburban neighborhoods (but may include a variety of land uses), constitutes approximately 11.3% of the County's land area, while low intensity development, which typically includes single-family housing areas, especially in rural neighborhoods, (but may include a variety of other land uses), constitutes approximately 16.7% of the County's land area.

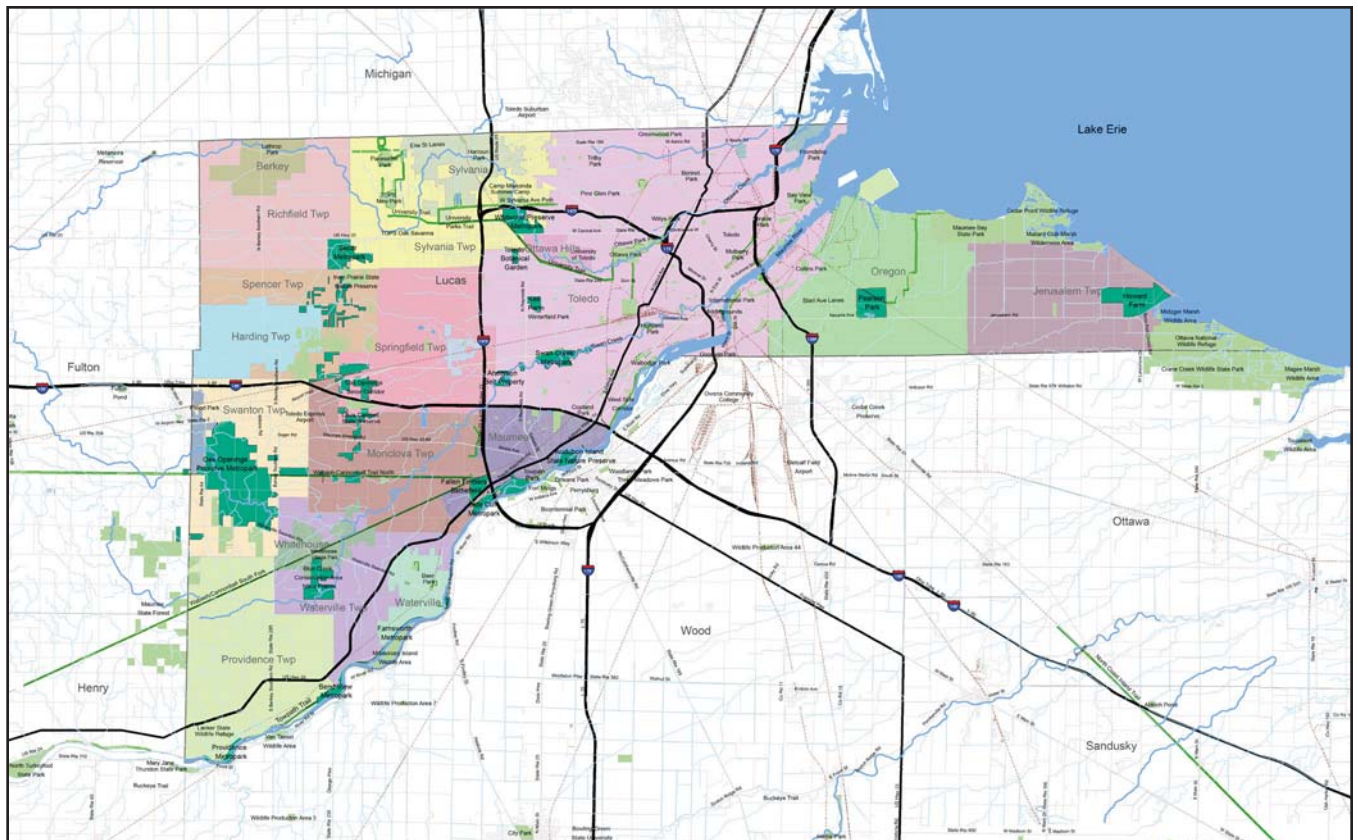


Figure 2-12. Municipalities and townships of Lucas County

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, The 2010 population of Lucas County's five cities, three villages, and ten townships (see Figure 2-12. Municipalities and Townships), was 441,815, with their 2012 population estimated at 437,998. Lucas County's population ranks sixth out of Ohio's 88 counties.

The 2012 estimate represents a drop of 9.6% from the County's high of 484,370 in 1970 and 3.7% drop from its year 2000 population. Between 2000 and 2010, the City of Toledo's population, which represents 65% of Lucas County's population, fell 8.4% from 313,619 to 287,208.

Within the county, Toledo's loss was the gain of some, but not all of its suburban and rural neighbors. Monclova Township saw the most growth in Lucas County, a near-doubling to 12,400 people. However, growth outside the City of Toledo was not universal. The municipalities of Maumee, Northwood, and Ottawa Hills also lost population, as did the townships of Jerusalem, Providence, and Swanton. (Source: Toledo Blade)

It is relevant to note that when comparing Toledo to the major cities in Ohio's six most populous counties, only Columbus' population represents a slightly higher percentage of its county's total population – largely because of the city's aggressive annexation policies in the 1960s. The others - Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Dayton, all constitute less than 40% of their respective county's population (see Table 2-1 Ohio's Largest Cities). This underscores Lucas County's relatively low population densities outside of the City of Toledo and suggests that opportunities still remain to preserve ecologically sensitive open spaces along Lucas County's major rivers and streams. Lucas County's population distribution pattern is graphically illustrated in Figure 2-13.

Other notable characteristics of the Lucas County population include age, ethnicity, income, and educational levels. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2012, 6.4% of Lucas county residents were under the age of five, 23.4% were under the age of eighteen, and 13.8% were sixty five or older. This indicates that the county's population was slightly younger than the averages for the State of Ohio, where the corresponding percentages for these age groups were 6.0%, 23.1% and 14.8%.

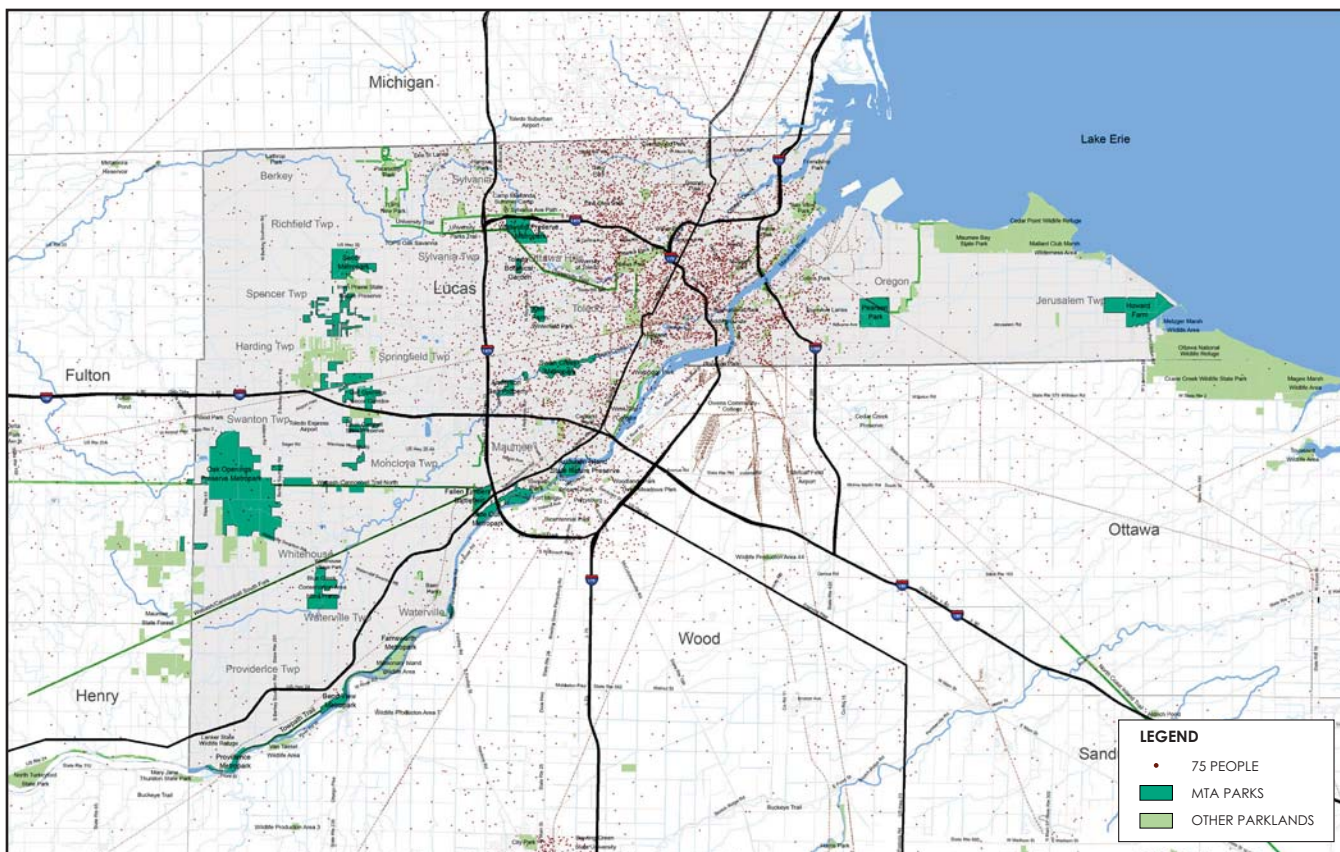


Figure 2-13. Population distribution of Lucas County. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau)

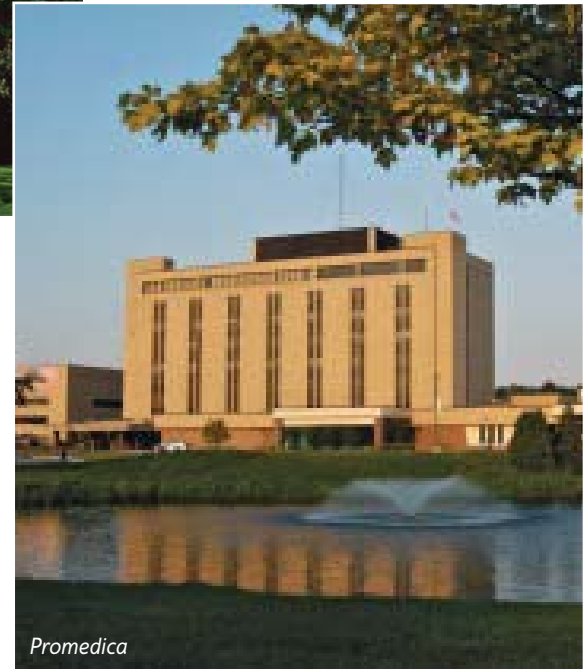
The Census Bureau reports that in 2010, 75.7% of Lucas County residents were White, 19.5% were Black or African American, and the remainder were of either Hispanic or Asian origin. Corresponding statewide percentages for these categories were 83.4%, 12.5% and 4.1%, suggesting that on average, Lucas County's population is more ethnically diverse than the State of Ohio's.

In 2012, it is estimated that there were 178,615 households in Lucas County with an average of 2.42 persons per household. The County's 2012 median household income was \$41,436 compared to a statewide median household income of \$48,246.

With respect to educational attainment, Lucas County's high school graduation rate of 87.8% is very close to the statewide average of 88.2%. On the other hand, Lucas County's percentage of persons over the age of 25 with bachelor's degrees or higher is 22.9%, or slightly lower than the statewide average of 24.7%, and considerably lower than the national average of 29%.

County	Population	Largest City	Population	% of Total Population
Cuyahoga	1,280,122	Cleveland	396,815	31
Franklin	1,163,414	Columbus	787,033	67
Hamilton	802,374	Cincinnati	296,943	37
Summit	541,781	Akron	199,110	36
Montgomery	535,153	Dayton	141,527	26
Lucas	441,815	Toledo	287,208	65

Table 2-1. Ohio's largest cities' percent of total population in their respective counties.



EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MAJOR INDUSTRIES AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Manufacturing comprises about one-fifth of Toledo's economic base. Nearly 1,000 manufacturing facilities are located in the metropolitan area. These facilities include automotive assembly and parts production, glass, plastic, and metal parts.

Toledo is home to the headquarters of such corporations as The Andersons, Dana Corporation, Libbey, Inc. and Owens Corning. Major employers include Chrysler, General Motors/Powertrain, ProMedica Health Systems, and Toledo Public Schools (see Figure 2-2. 2013 Major Industry Sector). With 10 major financial institutions, Toledo is also a banking and finance center for northwestern Ohio.

Medical and technologically-oriented businesses are emerging as a major force in the local economy with

Lucas County ranking among the top 50 counties in the United States that account for 50 percent of medical industry production. Several private testing laboratories and manufacturers of medical instruments and allied products are located in the Toledo area. In addition, more than 400 plastics, metalworking, and electronics companies adapt engineering and production capabilities to the medical device and instrument industries. With its nearby universities and large public school system, education is also economically significant. The Medical College of Ohio is the eighth largest employer in Toledo, and contributes nearly \$500 million to the economy per year.

Items and goods produced include automotive and truck components, health care products, glass products, fiberglass, packaged foods, plastic and paper products, building materials, furniture and metal products.



Port of Toledo

COMMERCIAL SHIPPING AND TRANSPORTATION

Toledo and Lucas County are situated at the center of a major market area; located within 500 miles of the city are 43 percent and 47 percent, respectively, of U.S. and Canadian industrial markets. A commercial transportation network, consisting of a Great Lakes port, railroads, interstate highways, and two international airports, provides access to this market area as well as points throughout the nation and the world.

Toledo is served by both Toledo Express Airport in Lucas County and Detroit Metropolitan Airport in nearby Detroit, Michigan. Toledo Express Airport is currently served by Allegiant Air Airlines, American / American Eagle Airlines and also functions as a major air freight center.

The Port of Toledo, on the Maumee River, is a 150-acre domestic and international shipping facility that includes a general cargo center, mobile cargo handling gear, and covered storage space. Designated as a Foreign Trade Zone, the complex affords shippers deferred duty payments and tax savings on foreign goods.

In 2012, iron ore, coal, and dry bulk materials accounted for approximately 45, 24 and 16 percent, respectively, of the commodities handled by the port. Grain shipments account for 13 percent of cargos and general cargo and liquid bulk products accounted for the remaining two percent of shipments. In 2012 ships, unloaded a total of 10,018,487 tons of cargo, down 12.95 percent from the 11,509,180 tons that crossed the docks in 2011.

Major Industry Sector	Employment (in Thousands)
Mining, logging and construction	11.1
Manufacturing	43.4
Trade, transportation and utilities	61.6
Information	3.3
Financial services	10.7
Professional and business services	36.6
Education and health services	50.7
Leisure and hospitality	34.0
Other services	11.3
Government	46.9
Total nonfarm	308.4

Table 2-2. 2013 Toledo Area nonfarm employment distribution by major industrial sector.

Toledo is served by four railroad systems, which provide direct and interline shipping, and Norfolk Southern maintains piggyback terminal facilities in the city. More than 90 truck firms link Toledo with all major metropolitan areas in the United States and points throughout Canada.

(Source: City Data.com; The Regional Growth Partnership)

TOLEDO AREA EMPLOYMENT

In 2013, average weekly wages for all industries in Lucas County was \$800, or approximately 13% below the national average of \$921. Between December 2012 and December 2013, Lucas County's unemployment rate dropped from 7.5% to 7.4%. During the same period, the national unemployment rate dropped from 7.6% to 6.5%. (Source: U.S. BLS, Current Employment Statistics.)

METROPARKS OF THE TOLEDO AREA AND TRAIL SYSTEMS

In the introduction of this plan, a brief overview of Metroparks was provided. In this chapter that overview is expanded to provide a more complete picture of the park system, its history, and its present day attributes.

Because they are so integral to the connection between people and parks, the basic characteristics of the trail systems that provide pedestrian and bicycle access to county residents and visitors are also included in this chapter.

A clear understanding of today's regional park and trail system establishes the baseline for the long range Metroparks' *Future Plan*.

HISTORY: OVER EIGHT DECADES OF PARK SYSTEM GROWTH

1928 - 1939

In August, 1928, Lucas County Probate Court Judge O'Brien O'Donnell signed a decree approving Toledo City Council's application to create a Metropolitan Park District within Lucas County. In 1930, The Toledo Metropolitan Park Board leased land along the former Maumee River side cut from the state of Ohio leading to the creation of Side Cut Metropark. During the decade that followed, land was acquired leading to the formation of five additional parks: Providence (with Side Cut, in 1930), Oak Openings Preserve (1931), Pearson (1934), Bend View (1935) and Farnsworth (1937). By 1939, Metroparks surpassed 1,000 acres of land with the acquisition of a 273 acre property at Oak Openings Preserve.

1940 - 1949

During the 1940s, Metroparks acquired additional acreage at Oak Openings Preserve, and in 1949 purchased 223 acres of land in Richfield Township to establish Secor Metropark. By 1949, with the addition of Secor, Metroparks landholdings totaled 3,744 acres.



Swan Creek in the planning stages. Source: The Blade



Side Cut

1950 - 1959

No new parks were established in the 1950's, but additional land acquisition at Oak Openings Preserve and Secor increased Metroparks landholdings to 4,345 acres by 1959.

1960 - 1969

During the 1960s, Metroparks' growth was focused primarily on land acquisition establishing (in 1963), then expanding, Swan Creek Preserve in Toledo. Land acquisition for Swan Creek Preserve and the expansion of Oak Openings Preserve and Secor increased Metroparks landholdings to 4,925 acres by 1969.

1970 - 1979

The 1970's represented a decade of continued expansion with acreage increases at Oak Openings Preserve, Secor, Side Cut and Swan Creek Preserve. In 1971, the park district's name was changed from Toledo Metropolitan Park District to Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area to reflect the district's countywide focus. Perhaps the most notable event of the decade was the 1975 purchase of the 475-acre Stranahan Estate, leading to the creation of Wildwood Preserve, Metroparks most visited park, in Sylvania Township. By 1979, Metroparks landholdings had expanded to just over 6,000 acres.

1980 - 1989

No new parks were established in the 1980's, however, in addition to the expansion of landholdings at Oak Openings Preserve, Side Cut, Providence, Farnsworth, Swan Creek Preserve, and Bend View, Metroparks took over management responsibilities of the Fallen Timbers Monument from the Ohio Historical Society in 1982. By 1989, expansion of existing parklands increased Metroparks total landholdings to 6,492 acres.



Fallen Timbers monument

1990 - 1999

With the donation of the 67 acre Anderson property along Swan Creek on the western edge of the City of Toledo, and the expansion of parklands at Oak Openings Preserve, Bend View, Farnsworth, Swan Creek Preserve and Wildwood Preserve, Metroparks landholdings had grown to 6,924 acres by the end of the last decade of the twentieth century.

2000 - PRESENT

From the year 2000 to the present, a number of key acquisitions, partnerships, and new management agreements have set the stage for the establishment of a new generation of Metroparks parkland and open space resources.

Chronologically, these initiatives include:

- 2000 – Purchase of Fallen Timbers Battlefield; purchase of the former Toledo House of Corrections, establishing the land base for Blue Creek Metropark.
- 2001 – Purchase of 114 additional acres at Fallen Timbers Battlefield.
- 2002 – Expansion of multiple parks including a 303 acre northern expansion of Pearson.

- 2003 – Establishment of the Oak Openings Corridor between Oak Openings Preserve and Secor.
- 2004 – Acquisition of the 215-acre Nona France Quarry as part of Blue Creek Metropark; donation of the Virginia Belt estate; expansion of Oak Openings Corridor and multiple parks.
- 2005 – Expansion of Oak Openings Corridor.
- 2006 – Acquisition of Middlegrounds; expansion of Oak Openings Corridor.
- 2007 – Acquisition of parkland near Reynolds Corners; expansion of Oak Openings Corridor and Fallen Timbers Battlefield.
- 2008 – Acquisition of 987-acre Howard Farms Property in eastern Lucas County; expansion of Oak Openings Corridor, Fallen Timbers Battlefield, and Blue Creek Metropark resulting in Metroparks total landholdings exceeding 10,000 acres.
- 2009 – Expansion of Oak Openings Corridor, Secor, and Providence.
- 2010 – Expansion of Oak Openings Corridor and Fallen Timbers Battlefield.
- 2011 – Acquisition of Chessie Circle Trail with assistance from the Trust for Public Land and other agencies; expansion of Oak Openings Corridor and Side Cut Metropark. Acreage surpassed 11,000 acres.
- 2012 – Expansion of Oak Openings Greenway Corridor, Secor, and Fallen Timbers Battlefield.
- 2013 – Expansion of Oak Openings Greenway Corridor and Swan Creek Preserve.

As a result of the initiatives undertaken during this most recent period in Metroparks' history, the District's landholdings have grown to 11,483 acres – a 66 percent increase in acreage since the beginning of 2000. Figure 2-14 shows the growth of Metroparks landholdings since its inception in 1928.

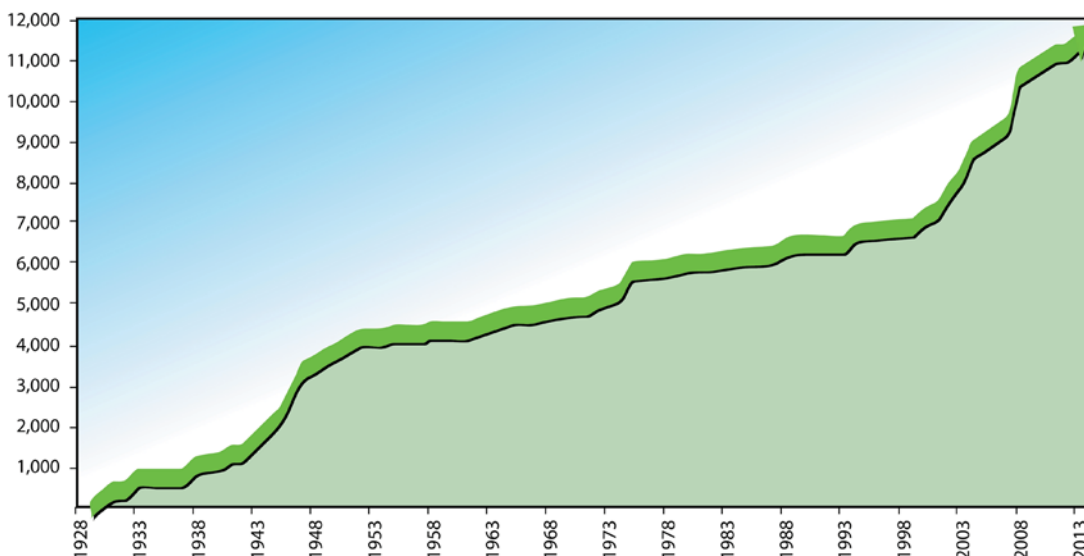


Figure 2-14. Growth of Metroparks Landholdings, 1928-2013



THE CURRENT PARK SYSTEM – EXISTING PARKS

The following section summarizes the basic characteristics of Metroparks' nine existing parks and preserves. Each Metropark within the 11,461 acre system offers amenities such as picnic areas, playfields, trails for hiking and cross country skiing, interpretive information and natural beauty. Each park or preserve also offers something unique, and these unique features are also highlighted in this section.



Location:
5100 W. Central Avenue
Toledo, Ohio

Acreage: 493

Total Trails: 11.2 miles

2012 Visitation:
1,111,566

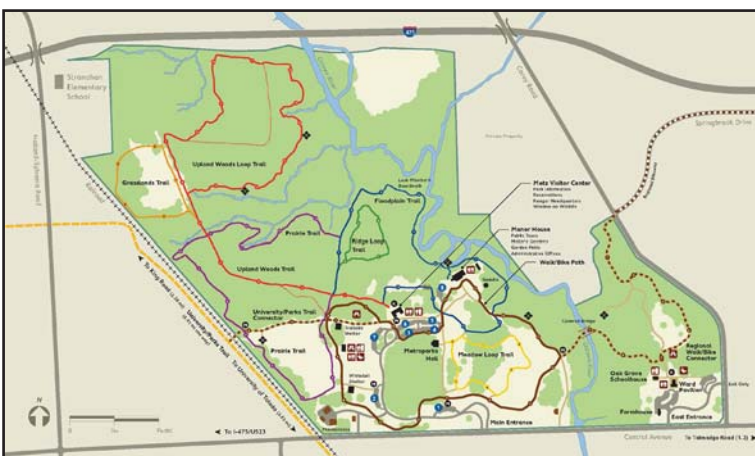
WILDWOOD PRESERVE

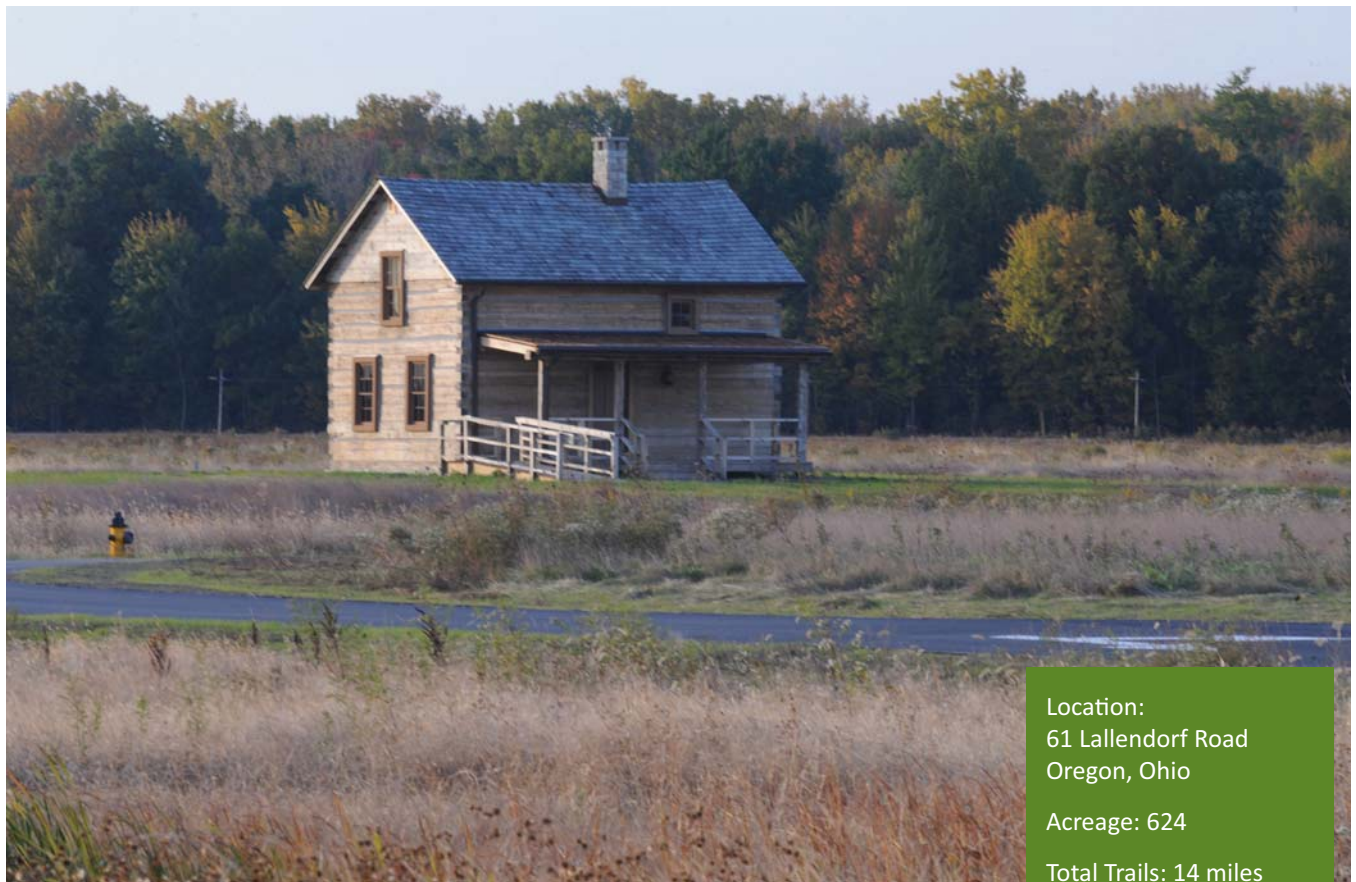
Wildwood is the former family estate of a local automotive executive. Metroparks purchased the estate grounds, including the family home, in the 1970s. The prairie community at Wildwood is home to many diverse and fascinating plants and animals, providing them with critical habitat throughout the year.

In spring, it is an essential breeding site for ground-nesting birds such as eastern towhees, field sparrows and American woodcock. Summer brings a spectacular display of prairie wildflowers and grasses, such as rough blazing star, big bluestem and Indian grasses, some reaching 10 feet high.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AND OTHER FEATURES

- Manor House
- Estate Buildings
- Oak Grove School
- Metz Visitor Center
- Metroparks Headquarters
- Connection to University/Parks Trail
- Indoor and Picnic Shelter Rentals
- Window on Wildlife
- Playgrounds





Location:
61 Lallendorf Road
Oregon, Ohio

Acreage: 624

Total Trails: 14 miles

2012 Visitation:
485,646

PEARSON

Pearson is one of the last remaining stands of the Great Black Swamp, a notorious forest that once blanketed much of northwest Ohio. Purple cress, spring beauties, trillium, wild ginger and wild geranium bloom in spring. The thick woods and location close to Lake Erie make Pearson a favorite stopover for a wide variety of migrating birds. Buildings, shelters, bridges,

ponds and a garden with a waterfall were built by workers enrolled in Depression-era work programs, such as the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AND OTHER FEATURES

- Pedal Boats
- Sledding Hill
- Ice Skating
- Indoor and Picnic Shelter Rentals
- Window on Wildlife
- Playground
- Ball Diamonds
- Soccer Field
- Tennis Courts
- Fishing
- Historical Works Progress Administration (WPA) Buildings & Bridges
- 1800s Black Swamp Cabin





Location:
4659 Airport Highway
Toledo, Ohio

Acreage: 441

Total Trails: 7.5 miles

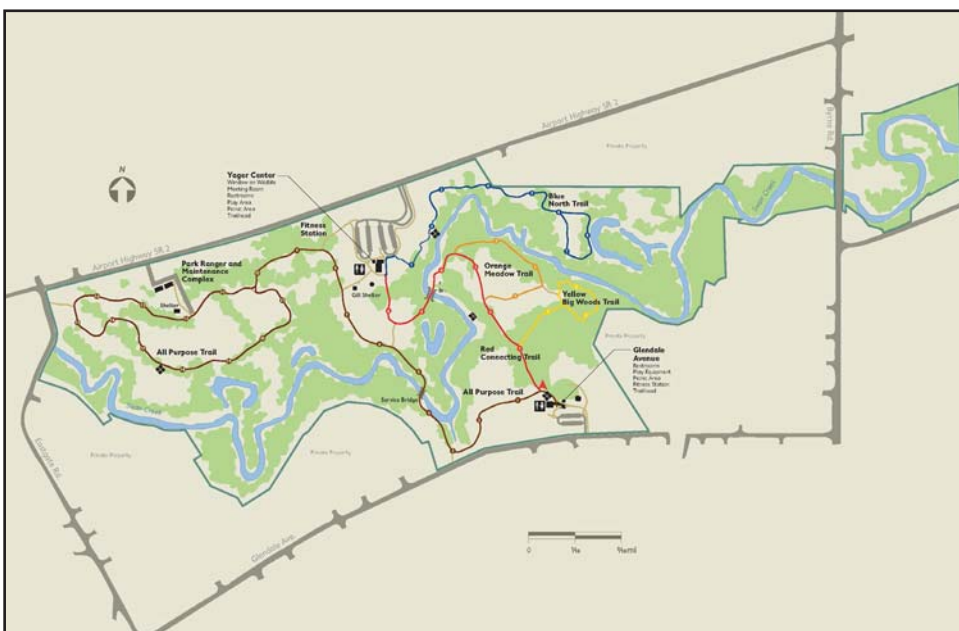
2012 Visitation:
439,395

SWAN CREEK PRESERVE

The South Toledo park named for the creek is an oasis in an urban area, provides crucial feeding and resting ground for migratory birds and a nesting area for resident species. The forested banks of Swan Creek offer a sheltered corridor of wild vegetation in the midst of the city. Animals such as deer, fox and raccoon use the corridor to move between feeding, resting and mating areas.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AND OTHER FEATURES

- Scenic Overlooks along the Trails
- Swinging Bridge
- Indoor and Picnic Shelter Rentals
- Window on Wildlife
- Playground





Location:
8505 S. River Road
Waterville, Ohio

Acreage: 53

Total Trails: 2.3 miles

2012 Visitation:
66,392 (includes Bend View)

FARNSWORTH

Farnsworth is a narrow park along the Maumee River overlooking Missionary, Butler and Indian islands, which are owned by the Ohio Division of Wildlife. The park is at one end of the Towpath Trail and has a boat launch and fishing access. The trail connects this park with Bend View and Providence Metroparks. The Interurban Bridge, which crosses the river at Farnsworth, is partially built atop Roche de Bout, a large, protruding rock in the river that served as an early landmark for native people, European explorers and armies. The abandoned span, once the world's largest earth-filled, concrete reinforced bridge, was part of a commuter railway system.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AND OTHER FEATURES

- Boat Launch
- Accessible Fishing Platform
- Access to Towpath Trail
- Indoor and Picnic Shelter Rentals
- Fishing
- Historical WPA Buildings & Bridges
- Camp Sites





Location:
4139 Girdham Road
Swanton, Ohio

Acreage: 174

Total Trails: 1.6 miles

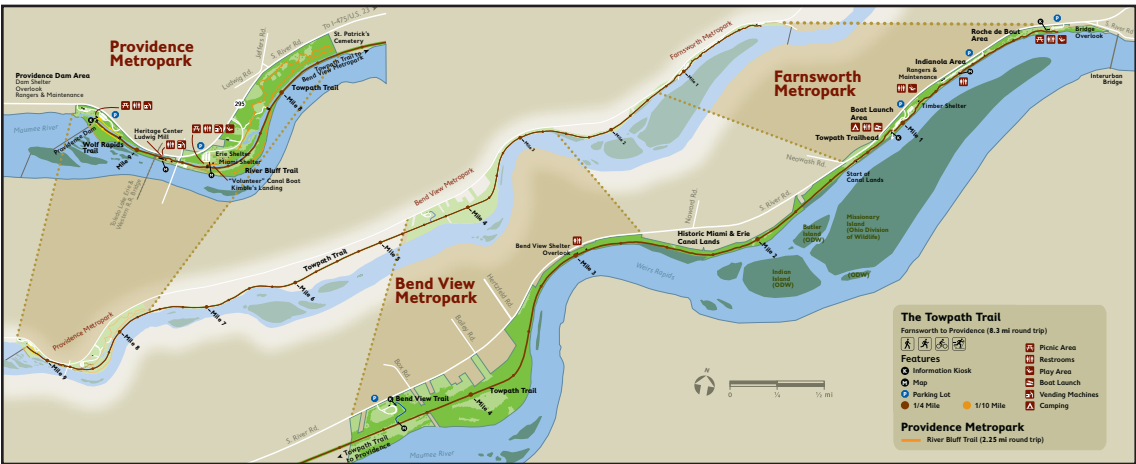
2012 Visitation:
included with Farnsworth

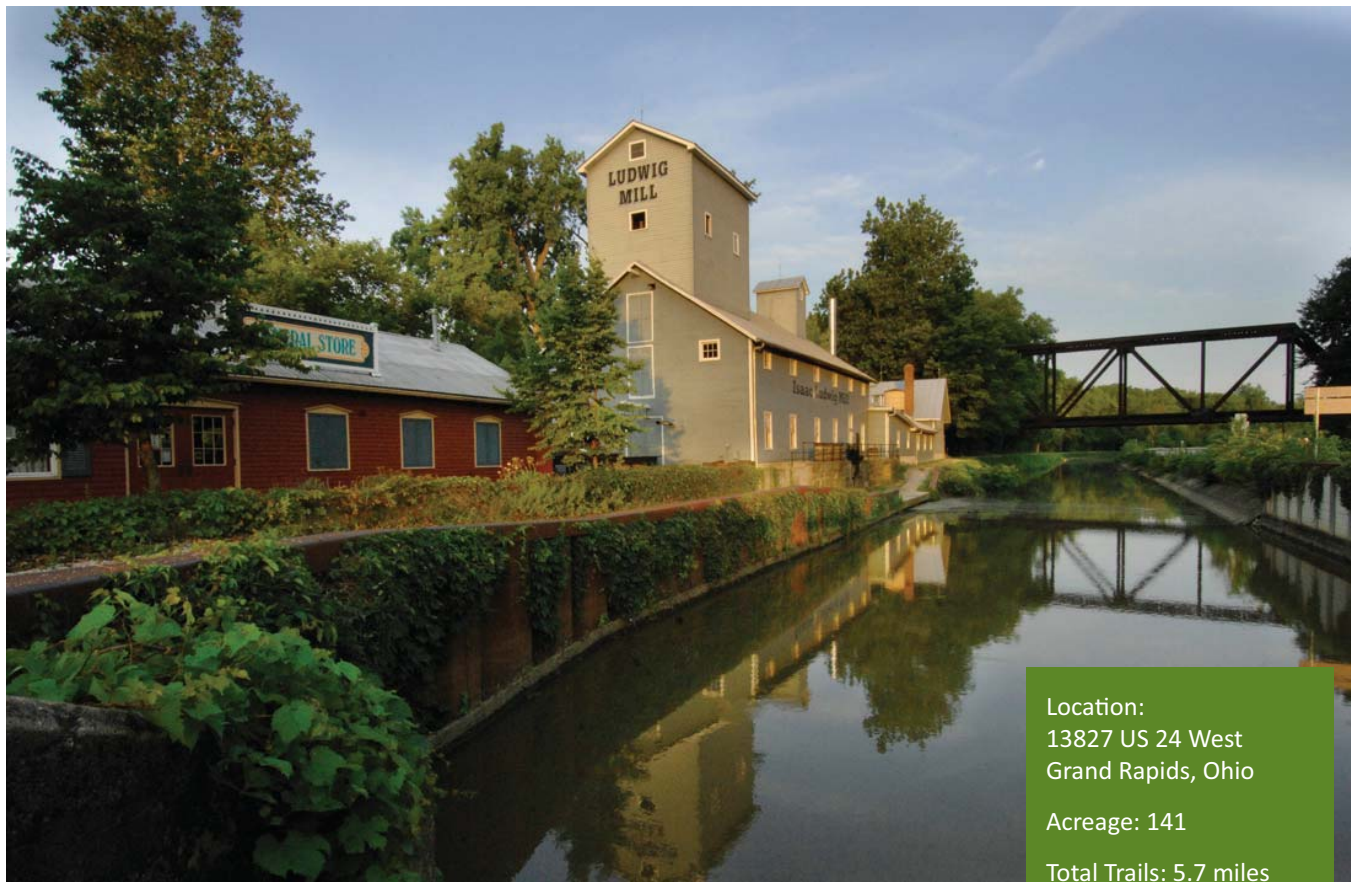
BEND VIEW

Bend View’s name describes its greatest attribute – an unequalled view of a 90-degree bend in the Maumee River. The park entrance is on the Anthony Wayne Trail, but it is also accessible by hiking 2.2 miles from Farnsworth or about six miles from Providence on the Towpath Trail. It’s worth the walk for what is often described as the best view along the State Scenic River. The park is a quiet escape from the main traffic of Farnsworth, offering a setting of solitude among the natural surroundings.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AND OTHER FEATURES

- Access to the Towpath Trail
- Access to the Maumee River
- Scenic views of the Maumee River
- Historic WPA Shelter Rental





Location:
13827 US 24 West
Grand Rapids, Ohio

Acreage: 141

Total Trails: 5.7 miles

2012 Visitation:
17,702

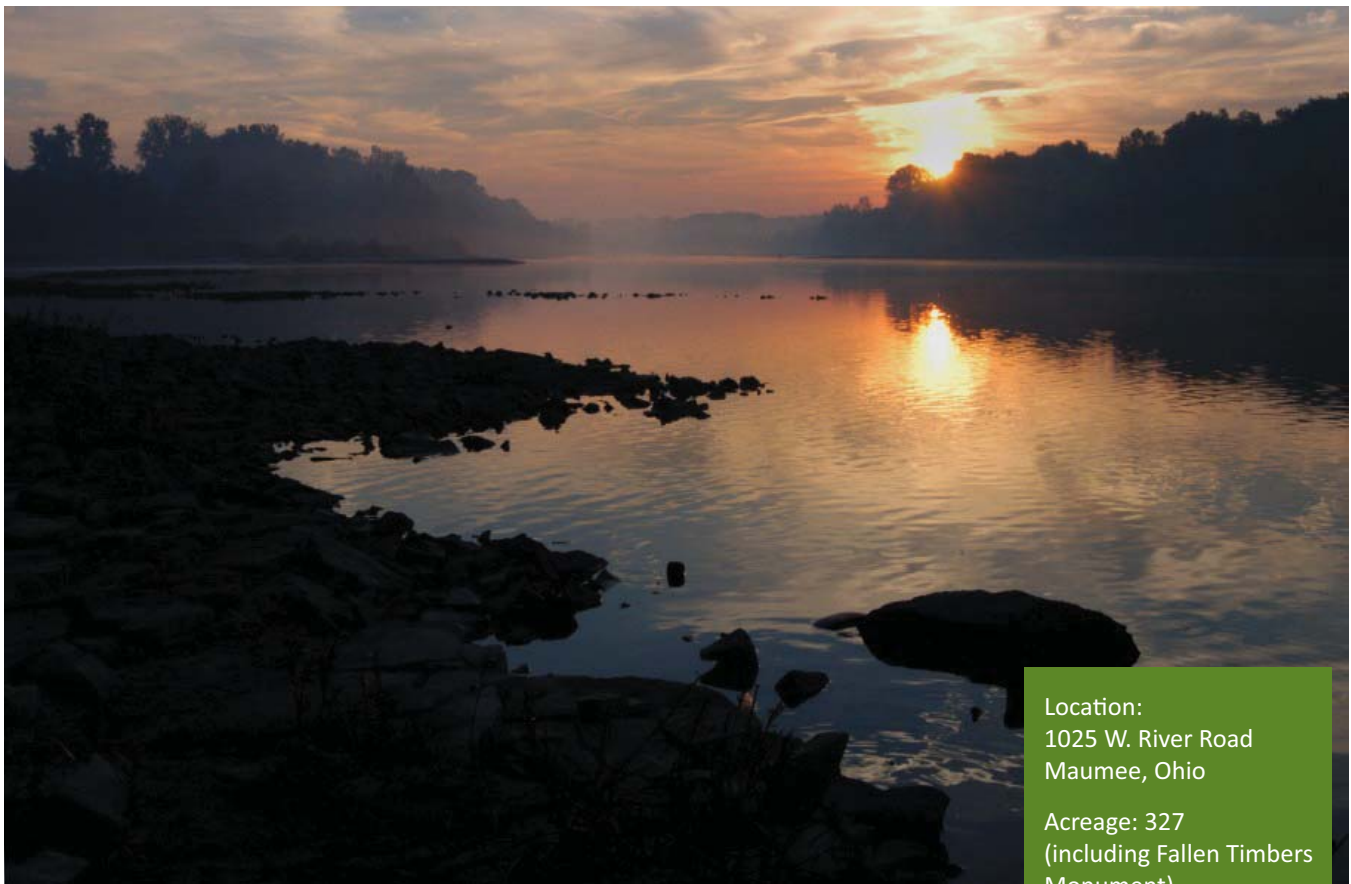
PROVIDENCE

Canal boats once carried goods and people 249 miles between Toledo and Cincinnati, linking Lake Erie and the Ohio River. Visitors to Providence today get a sense of what canal travel was like during a trip aboard an authentic, mule-drawn canal boat on an original section of the Miami and Erie Canal. The Providence Dam, just upriver from another attraction, the Isaac Ludwig Mill, was originally constructed to keep the canal filled with water. The canal boat and mill are open May through October.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AND OTHER FEATURES

- The Canal Experience (canal boat and historic mill)
- Overlooking Providence Dam
- On the Towpath Trail
- Indoor and Picnic Shelter Rentals
- Playground
- Fishing
- Historical WPA Buildings & Bridges





Location:
1025 W. River Road
Maumee, Ohio

Acreage: 327
(including Fallen Timbers
Monument)

Total Trails: 8 miles

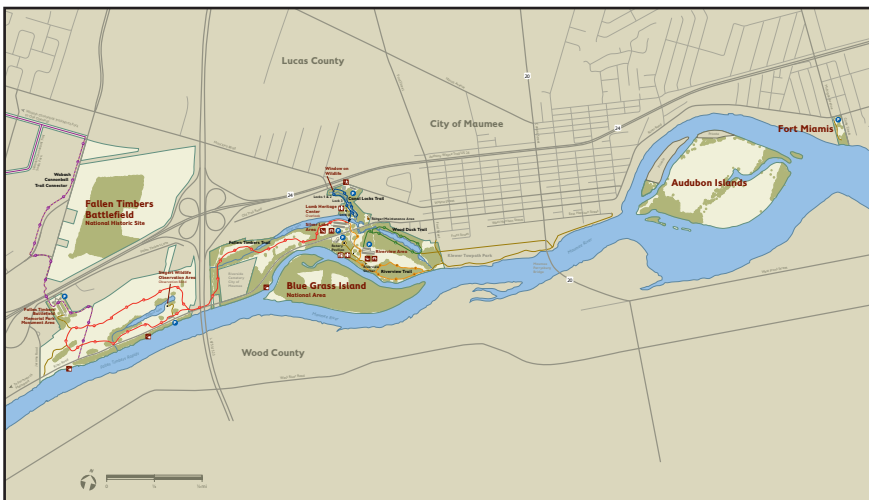
2012 Visitation:
376,253

SIDE CUT

Side Cut, the first Metropark, is named for the former “side cut” extension of the Miami and Erie Canal that connected the main line of the canal with the city of Maumee. Three of the six original locks from the canal system are preserved. In early spring Side Cut is a destination for fishermen from around the country as walleye swim upriver to spawn. The “spring run” is the largest of its kind on the Great Lakes. The flat rocks that extend into the river between Maumee and Waterville are known as the Maumee River Ledges, a rare form of a little-known habitat called an alvar, found in only a handful of places on the Great Lakes.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AND OTHER FEATURES

- Maumee River Access
- Historic Canal Locks
- Sledding Hill
- Indoor and Picnic Shelter Rentals
- Window on Wildlife
- Playground





Location:
4139 Girdham Road
Swanton, Ohio

Acreage: 3,765

Total Trails: 59 miles

2012 Visitation:
229,898

OAK OPENINGS PRESERVE

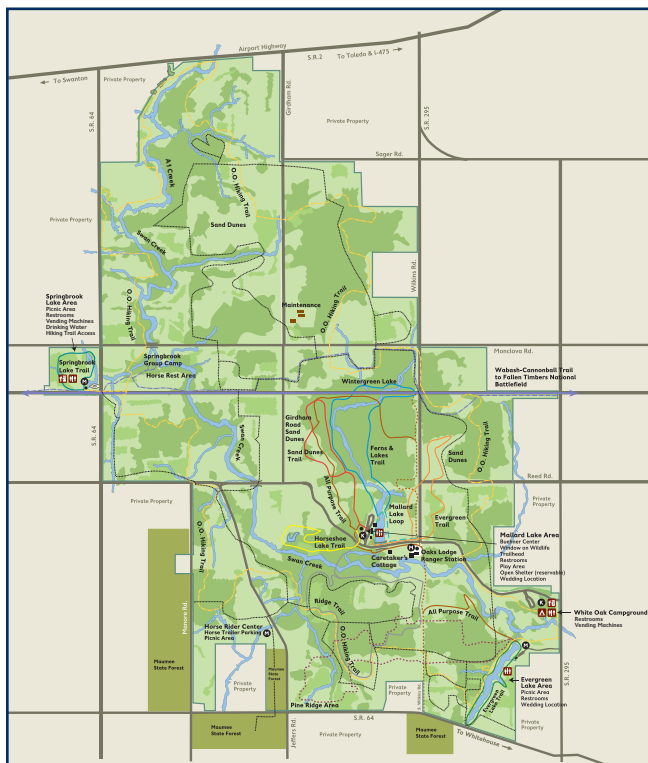
Prickly pear cactus, wild lupine and sand cherry bloom atop dry, hot sand dunes just yards away from orchids growing in low, wet swales. Such contrasts are what make the Oak Openings Region the subject of endless

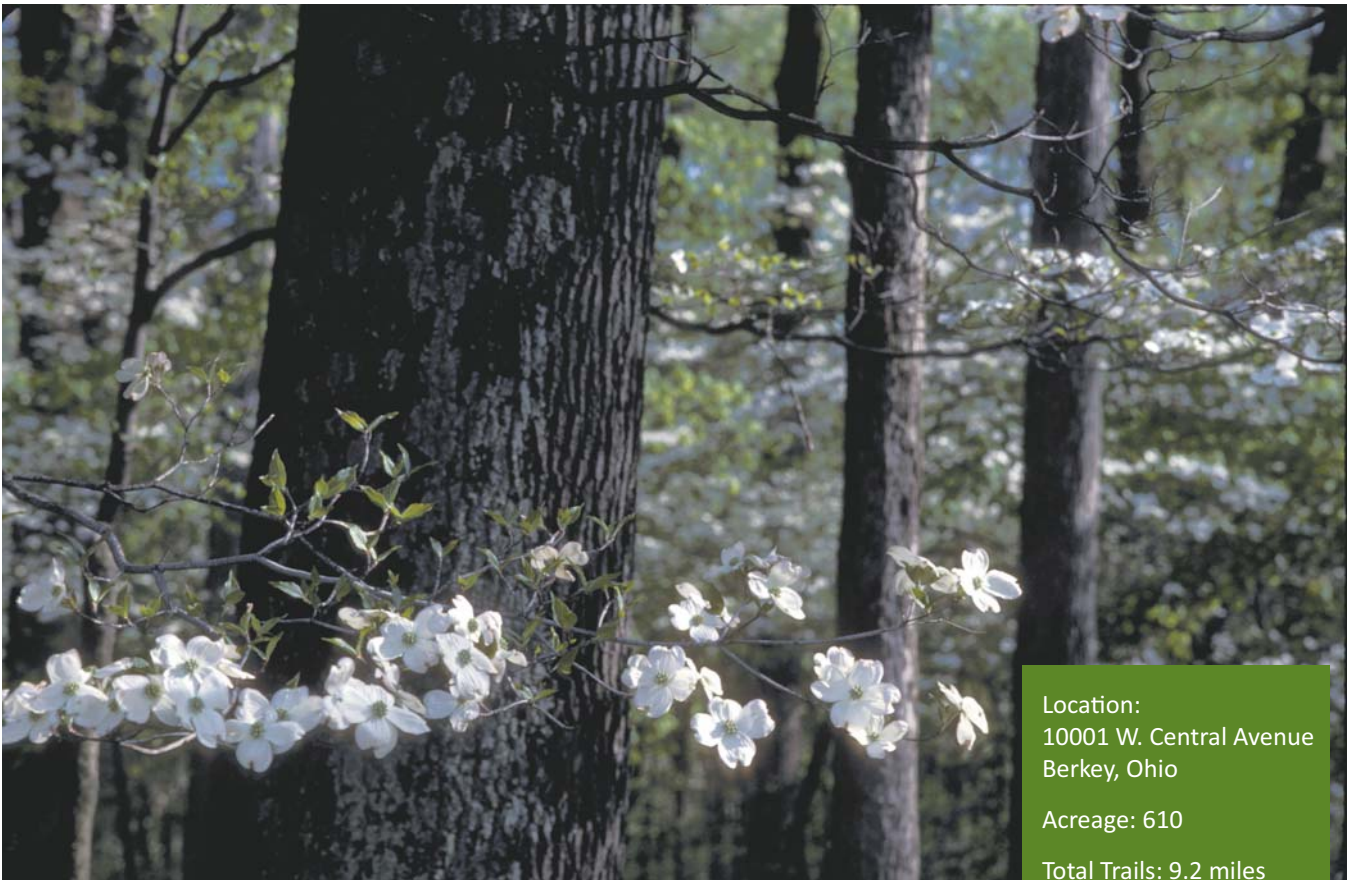
fascination for naturalists.

The largest Metropark takes its name from the surrounding region, which is 23 times larger than the preserve. Oak Openings is a birder's paradise. It is the nesting place of bluebirds, indigo buntings, whippoorwills, lark sparrows and many other species, as well as an excellent location to see migrating songbirds in the spring.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AND OTHER FEATURES

- Buehner Center
- Indoor and Picnic Shelter Rentals
- Window on Wildlife
- Rare Oak Openings Plant and Animal Communities
- Playground
- Horse Trails/Horse Center
- Fishing
- Historical WPA Buildings & Bridges
- Sand Dunes
- Camp Sites





Location:
10001 W. Central Avenue
Berkey, Ohio

Acreage: 610

Total Trails: 9.2 miles

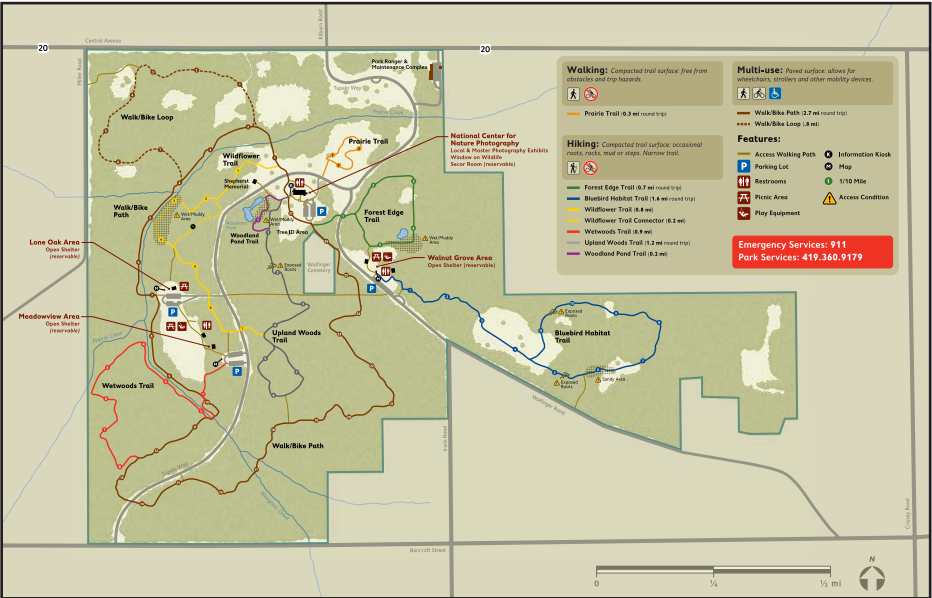
2012 Visitation:
376,253

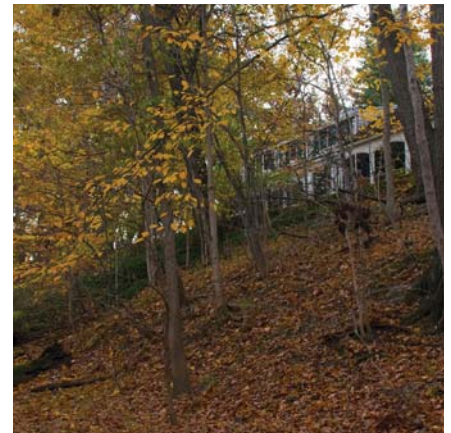
SECOR

Secor is a place of distinct contrasts. Tall timber gives way to second growth forest, rolling sandy areas fade to lowlands that are usually wet, and thickets open into meadows and prairies. Some of Secor’s many distinguishing characteristics include its location in the Oak Openings Region, northwest Ohio’s largest concentration of native dogwood and a restored tallgrass prairie.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AND OTHER FEATURES

- National Center for Nature Photography
- Indoor Meeting Room and Picnic Shelter Rentals
- Window on Wildlife
- Play Fields
- Large Picnic Areas
- Historic Wolfinger Cemetery
- Ski Trail





EMERGING PARKS

Between 2000 and 2008, Metroparks acquired a number of properties throughout Lucas County that will serve as the foundation for up to eight new park facilities. Conceptual development plans are now being completed for each of these highly diverse landholdings. Site Specific Master Plans for eight of the future parks; Fallen Timbers Battlefield / Fort Miamis, Brookwood / Swan Creek Corridor, Blue Creek Metropark, Future Metropark (former Keil Farm), and the Oak Openings Corridor, have been developed as the second part of the Metroparks Comprehensive

Plan, as discussed in this document's introduction. Conceptual development plans for Howard Farms and Middlegrounds were developed independently by Metroparks prior to initiation of the Comprehensive Plan (reference plans in Appendix B). It is anticipated that improvements to these eight landholdings will occur within a period of five to 10 years.

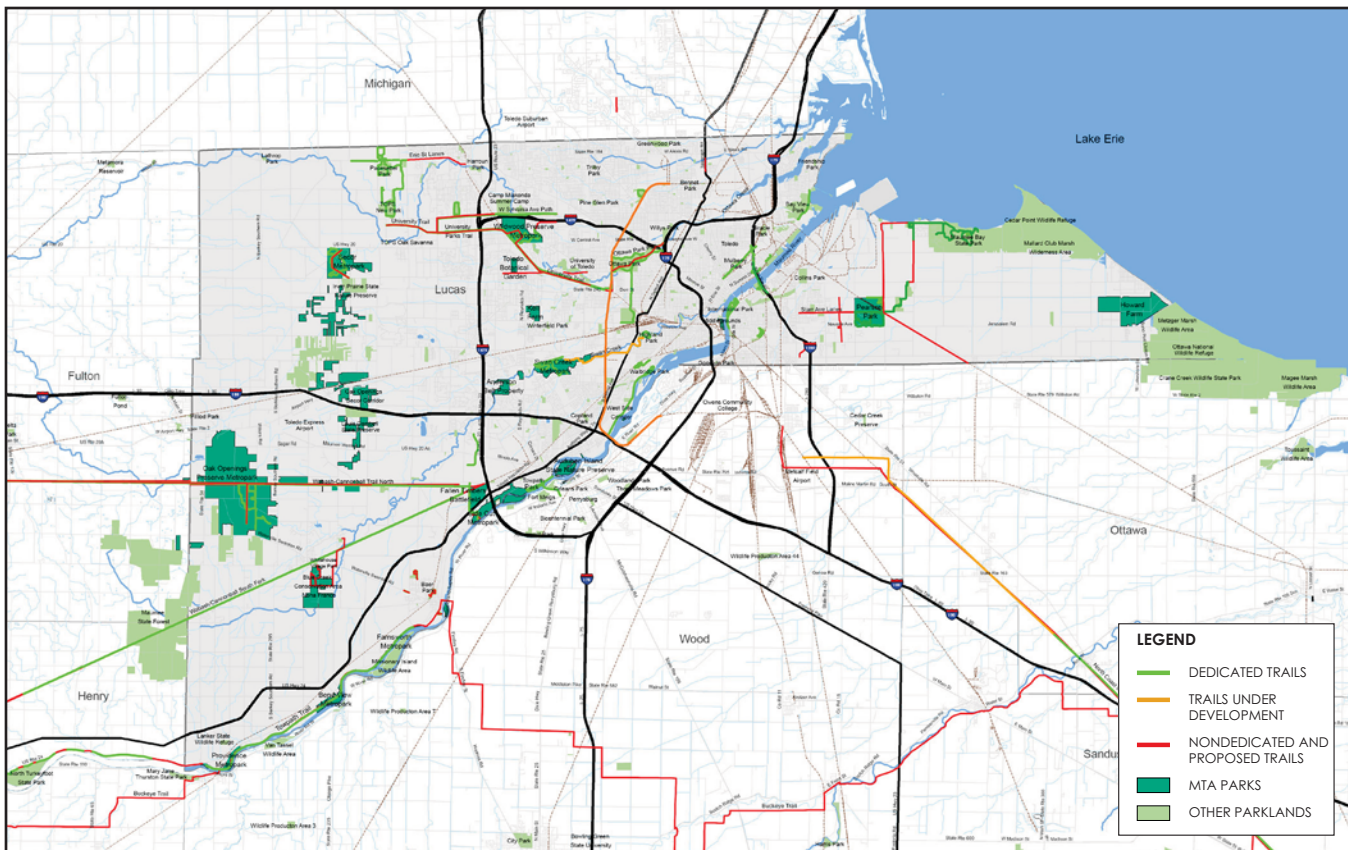


Figure 2-15. Trail systems of Lucas County. (Source: TMACOG data)

TRAIL SYSTEMS

Within Lucas County, there are a variety of trails and trail segments, where planning, development and management involve multiple agencies that include both governmental and non-profit entities. These trails and trail segments typically function as linear pedestrian and bicycle travel pathways (in many instances on former rail rights-of-way) and complement in-park trail systems. Existing and proposed trails – both dedicated off-road and designated on-road bike routes, are shown on Figure 2-15.

In addition to over 100 trail miles within all of the Metroparks parks and preserves, Metroparks is either a joint management partner or participating owner in several key trails as noted in the following discussion.

Three major hard surfaces, off road trails that generally extend east to west, account for a majority of the dedicated trail mileage within the County.

These are:

- The 6.3 mile University / Parks Trail, which currently extends from the University of Toledo Campus to King Road in Sylvania Township, with a connecting trail to Metroparks' Wildwood Preserve. The trail is owned by Lucas County and maintained by Metroparks, the University of Toledo and the City of Toledo.
- The north and south forks of the Wabash Cannonball Trail, which extend west and southwest from the vicinity of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield in Maumee, Ohio. The paved North Fork extends for 9.5 miles within Lucas County, connecting Fallen Timbers Battlefield with the 5.3 mile Oak Openings Preserve all-purpose trail. It then continues west, unpaved for another 36.5 miles to Montpelier, Ohio. The paved South Fork takes a southwesterly route beginning near Fallen Timbers Battlefield for a distance of 10.4 miles within Lucas County then continues another 6.6 miles into Henry County to the edge of Liberty Center, Ohio. The South Fork passes through the Village of Whitehouse and the Maumee State Forest. Metroparks is the managing partner of the Wabash Cannonball Trail. Other partners include Lucas County, the Village of Whitehouse, the City of Maumee, and the Northwest Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association.

- The 8.3 mile Towpath Trail that connects the Farnsworth, Bend View and Providence Metroparks along the north bank of the Maumee River in southwestern Lucas County. The Towpath Trail is part of the Buckeye Trail System, and follows the remains of the Miami and Erie Canal towpath where mules towed flat bottom boats along the canal. The trail is an integral component of the three Metroparks through which it travels.

In addition to the major trails identified above, other notable trail segments shown on Figure 2-15 include:

- Trail segments managed by the City of Toledo, which include the 1.9 mile Parkside Boulevard Path, the 1.5 Green Belt Parkway Path, and the 2 mile Summit Street Path / Manhattan Avenue Bike Path.
- The two mile West Sylvania Bike Path and the four mile Quarry Ridge Bike Trail managed by the City of Sylvania.
- The one mile Technology Drive / Briarfield Boulevard Path managed by Monclova Township.
- The one mile Riverwalk managed by the City of Maumee.
- The one mile Nona France Bike Trail managed by the Village of Whitehouse.
- The 3.6 mile Bay Shore Road Path/North Stadium Path / Coontz Complex Path managed by the City of Oregon.

While there are a number of trails within Lucas County that are either planned or under development, the most significant planned trail is the Chessie Circle Trail (see Figure 2-16. Chessie Trail System). The 11.6-mile north-south trail is a future pedestrian and bicycle path to be built within the former Westside rail corridor, a remnant of the Toledo Terminal rail corridor that once circled the City of Toledo. The corridor right-of-way was purchased in 2011 from the CSX Corporation (a descendent of the former Chessie System) by a group of regional partners: the City of Toledo, the University of Toledo, Metroparks of the Toledo Area, the Wood County Port Authority, and the Wood County Park District with assistance from the Trust for Public Land.

Although trains still operate in some parts of the corridor, much of the right-of-way is vacant and the tracks have been removed. Construction of the multi-use path is part of TMACOG's long range transportation plan for the region. (Source: TMACOG)



Figure 2-16. Chessie trail system. Source: TMACOG.org

METROPARKS AFFILIATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to its role as managing partner of two regional trails described above, Metroparks provides partial funding and in-kind support to Toledo Botanical Garden, a 60-acre living museum and center for horticulture and the arts.



CHAPTER 3 – TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Quarry Pond at Blue Creek Metropark

This section of the *Future Plan* focuses on a variety of indicators influencing the future of the Greater Toledo Area economy, its residents, and its institutions. It identifies trends and places them in a national context. It then identifies both national and local park and recreational resource trends, drawing on data from the Outdoor Foundation's 2013 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report and the 2013 Metroparks Needs Assessment. From these trends and needs, opportunities that will shape the vision for Metroparks' future are then identified.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC TRENDS

Long term projections of the Toledo Area's economic health are, at best, difficult to forecast. Nonetheless, it is useful to examine current trends, because they can serve as indicators that help sharpen the focus of this *Future Plan*.

THE JOB SITUATION

Regionally, the labor force dropped by some 16,000 employees between 2009 and 2012. More recently, however, an improving labor market has spurred a turnaround in the labor force, with job growth struggling to keep up with new entrants in the labor market. The reality is, however, that much of the recent job growth has been concentrated in low wage, low value-added service employment and this is dampening personal income growth in the area.

In 2007, the median household income in the Toledo area was 10 percent lower than the U.S. average. Going into 2011, the median household income had dropped to 16 percent below the national average and was at its 2005 level. The severe loss of high-wage jobs has put labor pricing out of balance, limiting income growth in the near term. It's also significant that with only about 24 percent of the population age 25 and older holding at least a college degree, the area's ability to attract high wage service jobs will be limited. By comparison, nationally, 29 percent of adults over age 25 have a college degree.

Over the near term, the region's local median income will likely grow more slowly than the national average, implying that the difference in incomes is set to widen.

(Source: Moody's Analytics; The PNC Financial Services Group)

HOUSING

A higher than average rate of foreclosure activity has dampened local prices by bringing highly discounted properties to market.

Despite a higher than average foreclosure rate, the Toledo area housing market is rebalancing and supports to housing in the near term include higher affordability, moderate jobs and income growth and low interest rates. On the downside, years of net out-migration and declining household formations has driven up the local vacancy rate to a level that is significantly higher than the national average.

Despite the positive trajectory for the area's jobs and income, the economic recovery will only be moderate. As a result, inventory will likely be absorbed slowly and residential construction will likely persist at a low level in the near term.

(Source: National Association of Realtors; Fiserv; The PNC Financial Services Group)

DEMOGRAPHIC IMPLICATIONS

The total population of Lucas County had a slight decrease of approximately 2.9% from 455,054 in 2000 to 441,815 in 2010. The current 2012 population estimate is 437,998, and it is projected to fall to 432,521 in 2017, and total 419,294 by 2027.

According to the U.S. Census reports, the total number of households in the County has decreased by approximately 1.4%, from 182,847 in 2000 to 180,267 in 2010.

The County is estimated to have 178,669 households in 2012, and is expected to shrink modestly to 174,022 households by 2027.

The net outmigration from which the Toledo market has suffered in the past decade is now showing signs of abating, thanks to improved job prospects in the region. The labor force is growing again, after several years of decline. Nevertheless, a full recovery from the population drain that came with extensive job losses during the 2007 -2010 recession is not likely to occur soon. Not only is the area's population now smaller than at its recent peak, but labor force quality has declined in the process. Furthermore, the metro area's economic potential is hamstrung because labor force participation is the lowest it has been in the past two decades and is set to fall further over the long term as the aging population retires. It will be a challenge for the area to attract well-paying employment.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK SUMMARY

Longer term, Toledo will need to develop new growth drivers to replace its traditional durable goods manufacturing base. Unfavorable demographics make the task of attracting new industries—which are dependent upon dynamic labor force trends—more difficult. Solar technology is an area that holds promise as a piece of the solution for Toledo. Because of the region's prominence in glassmaking, solar panels present a natural market transition opportunity for Toledo. In addition, they are high value-added products, which is a plus for income growth. Toledo hosts two large universities and several major healthcare providers, which improve the quality of life for potential job seekers and provide a pool of skilled labor for potential employers. So, while there are still important risks facing the Toledo market area resulting from its past industrial structure, the local economy has some breathing room to pursue a new course—one that likely will build upon its traditional competencies in areas such as fabrication, education and healthcare.

(Source: The PNC Financial Services Group)

NATIONAL PARK AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCE TRENDS

In 2012, Americans took advantage of the variety and accessibility of the nation's outdoor recreational opportunities. Last year, nearly half (49.4%) of the total population in the U.S. participated in some form of outdoor recreation. From 2011 to 2012, total participants of outdoor recreation increased by approximately 800,000 people, bringing the total to a record-high of nearly 142 million people. The total number of outdoor outings in 2012 reached an all-time high of 12.4 billion excursions (up from 11.5 billion outdoor excursions in 2011). The report also showed that about one-fourth of outdoor enthusiasts participated in outdoor activities at least twice per week.

Walking for fitness was the overwhelming leader in overall participation, with approximately 116.7 million Americans (over 40% of the total population) engaging in the activity. Running / Jogging was also very popular, with over 52 million participants, which represents just over 18% of the total population.

Based on 2012 data, Table 3-1 depicts the top ten most popular outdoor recreation activities in terms of total participants.

It is interesting to note that for many public park and recreation agencies, the largest areas of overall participation and growth are in outdoor, non-traditional sports and activities. According to the Outdoor Participation Report 2013, the most significant growth in participation among outdoor activities over the last five years of data (2007-2012), participation in adventure racing grew the most, with an increase of 210.89%, followed by non-traditional, off-road triathlons (up 198.55%), and traditional triathlons (up 173.68%). Also, a national trend of potentially significance to the Toledo area, with its abundant waterfront access, is a 60.63% participation increase in recreational kayaking over the last five years.

Activity	% of Americans	Total Participants
Walking for Fitness	40.6%	116.7 Million
Running / Jogging	18.2%	52.2 Million
Bicycling (Road / Paved Surfaces)	13.7%	39.2 Million
Fishing (Freshwater / Other)	13.6%	39.1 Million
Camping (Car / Backyard / RV)	13.3%	38 Million
Hiking	12.0%	34.5 Million
Camping (Within ¼ Mile of Vehicle / Home)	10.4%	30 Million
Wildlife Viewing (> ¼ Mile of Vehicle / Home)	8.0%	23 Million
Target Shooting (Handgun)	5.6%	16.1 Million
Hunting (All)	5.1%	14.7 Million

Table 3-1. Top Ten Outdoor Recreation Activities – All Persons, Age 6+

2013 METROPARKS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

During August 2013, Sanford H. Odesky, Market Research Consultants, conducted telephone interviews with four hundred registered Lucas County voters selected at random. The interview covered a variety of topics relevant to the Metroparks: attitudes toward the county, Metroparks usage, image, information sources and considerations for the future of the Metroparks. The main goal of the survey was to identify user opportunities as part of the Metroparks' district wide comprehensive planning effort.

The following tables and excerpts from the 2013 Needs Assessment survey (see Tables 3-2, 3-3 and 3-4) provide a clear picture of the outdoor recreational activities and resources that are valued by Lucas County residents.

Outdoor Activity	% Yes
Hiking / Walking	86.5
Swimming	75.0
Fishing	58.0
Nature based photography	47.8
Running / Jogging	46.5
Outdoor skill classes	44.0
Birding	41.3
Canoeing / Kayaking	41.0
Primitive camping (tent)	40.0
Mountain biking off road	36.0
Archery	27.3
Overnight backpacking	25.0
Hunting	19.0

Table 3-2. Residents who participate in/or would participate in the outdoor activities if they had the chance locally.

- It is important (88.3%) to the residents of Lucas County that there are sufficient parks and green space within walking distance of their residence (57.8% very important and 30.5% somewhat important).
- Two thirds (64.0%) have a very favorable opinion of Metroparks.
- Slightly more (68.3%) strongly agree that the Metroparks contribute to the betterment of Lucas County.
- Eight in ten respondents (84.3%) have personally visited an area Metropark in the past year.
- The number one activity visitors participate in is "walk/run trails" (64.8%).
- The vast majority (90.3%) have used the walking and biking trails within the Metroparks.
- Far fewer residents use/or ever used the county's walking and biking trail system (38.8%).
- Respondents agree (75.3%) the current county trail system should be expanded to better connect existing trails, neighborhoods, parks, schools and communities (38.8% strongly agree and 36.5% somewhat agree).
- Respondents agree (78.3%) that the Metroparks should consider managing natural areas within the Toledo City Park System (36.0% strongly agree and 42.3% somewhat agree).
- Nearly all respondents (94.3%) are in agreement that it is important for the future of the area that the Metroparks collaborate with other local entities (65.5% strongly agree and 28.8% somewhat agree).

Important aspects of the Metroparks land acquisition and trail development program (10 means very important)	Mean	Top 2 Box (% 9 & 10)
Preserve floodplains along streams and creeks that can be used to manage storm water, improve water quality, and provide for recreation corridors.	8.60	62.5
Preserve significant natural areas solely for wild life protection and minimal public access.	8.02	48.5
Acquire property immediately adjacent to existing parks to buffer road noise, protect views and generally enlarge existing parks.	7.59	40.1
Acquire property to directly connect parks, communities and connect the existing regional trail system.	7.57	42.3

Table 3-3. Residents' opinion on land acquisition and trail development program.

Support for improving spaces throughout the system (10 is very supportive)	Mean	Top 2 Box (% 9 & 10)
Maintain existing park amenities, structures and shelters.	9.24	78.3
Develop biking / walking trails to better connect existing trails, parks and communities and expand walking and biking transportation and recreation.	7.91	50.5
Develop an outdoor skills park or park area to promote and teach outdoor recreational skills (like camping, mountain biking, rock climbing and kayaking).	7.71	45
Continue to purchase land to preserve open space for wildlife habitat and trail development.	7.66	45.8
Purchase land to develop trails and create public access.	7.39	42.5
Develop a special events park for festivals and events, like running events or holiday festivals which could reduce the user conflict and congestion in existing parks.	7.37	43.5
Develop new off leash dog parks.	6.09	35.0

Table 3-4. Residents' opinion on improving park systems spaces.

CONCLUSIONS: THE OPPORTUNITIES

From an economic development perspective, it is reasonable to assert that the Toledo area and Lucas County are at a crossroads. To quote the text in the economic outlook summary, "Toledo will need to develop new growth drivers to replace its traditional durable goods manufacturing base. Unfavorable demographics make the task of attracting new industries—which are dependent upon dynamic labor force trends— more difficult". This challenge, however, can be met.

There is abundant evidence that communities that espouse and promote healthy, active, outdoor lifestyles are in the best position to attract members of a well-educated, dynamic labor force. Top talent is attracted to places where the quality of life and access to outdoor activities and nature are as important as the simple availability of jobs, regardless of the business sector.

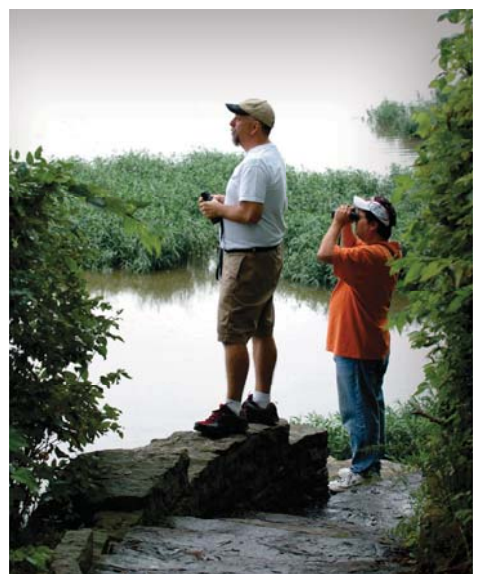
Nationally, walking for fitness is the overwhelming participation leader among outdoor recreational activities, and when combined with running and jogging, 168.9 million Americans - over 58% of the U.S. population, now engage in these activities.

In Lucas County, this level of engagement is matched, where the top activity visitors participate in is "walk/run trails" followed by "enjoy the scenery." The 2013 Needs Assessment reveals that with local access, the top three outdoor activities county residents would

participate in were hiking / walking, swimming and fishing. This demand is reinforced by the fact that 75.3% of survey respondents believe that the current county trail system should be expanded to better connect existing trails, neighborhoods, parks, schools and communities.

Locally, there is also evidence that a high value is placed on conservation and the protection of natural assets, which lie at the core of Metroparks' mission. Two thirds (64.0%) have a very favorable opinion of Metroparks, and slightly more (68.3%) strongly agree that the Metroparks contribute to the betterment of Lucas County. Further, a high percentage of respondents feel it is very important to preserve floodplains along streams and creeks that can be used to manage storm water, improve water quality, and provide for recreation corridors. Strong support was also voiced for preserving significant natural areas solely for wildlife habitat and ecological protection with minimal public access.

The natural assets of the region, presented in Chapter 2 create the opportunity for the Toledo Area to transform its future, meet the economic challenges it has faced for several decades, and gain recognition for the value it offers current and future residents. Metroparks of the Toledo Area is well positioned to play a pivotal role in making that opportunity a reality.



CHAPTER 4 – THE PLAN: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE



Tenmile Creek

In 1930, when the newly created Board of Park Commissioners went to the voters seeking support for a levy to purchase parkland, they focused on property along Lake Erie, Swan and Tenmile Creeks, and the Maumee River. A film promoting the Levy even posed the question - “Why shouldn’t Lucas County own some of the 19 miles of Lake Erie shoreline”. Over 80 years ago, enlightened community leaders recognized the value of preserving for the public, the region’s most valuable natural assets.

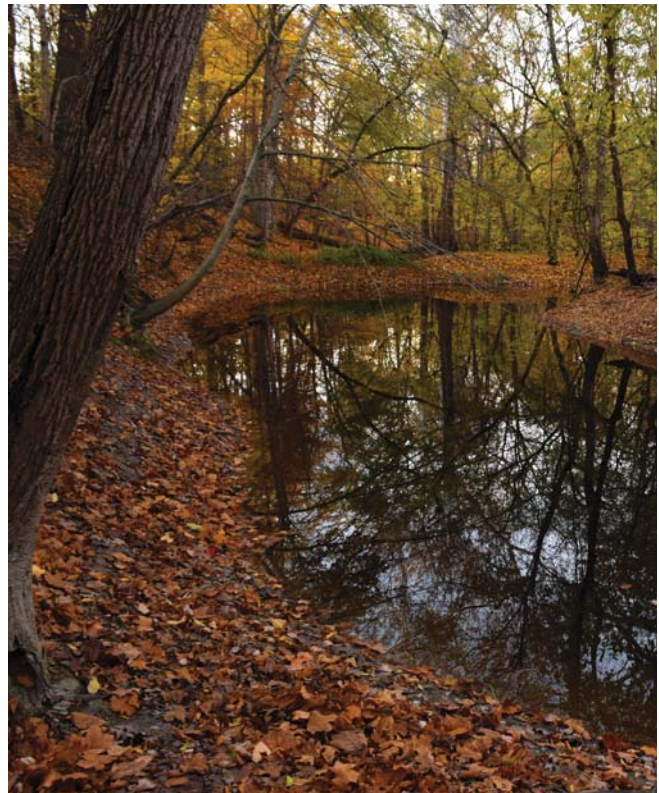
Today, those values still hold true, perhaps even more so, given the fact that much of the county’s once unspoiled lake and river front land is less accessible to the public – a consequence of industrial, commercial and residential development.

A RENEWED PERSPECTIVE

This *Future Plan* is dedicated to the proposition that the county's water resources are among its most valuable assets and deserve continued protection, restoration and public accessibility. Metroparks has held true to this proposition, with seven of its nine existing parks and preserves now located on the county's principal rivers and creeks. Unique among them is Oak Openings Preserve, located near the headwaters of Swan Creek. Metroparks has fully committed to the preservation of this rare and globally recognized ecosystem and will continue to focus on the Oak Openings Region - particularly the corridor that extends from Oak Openings Preserve to Secor Metropark.

At the same time, in addition to preserving ecologically significant portions of the Oak Openings Region, Metroparks must renew its commitment to linking, protecting and restoring the primary stream corridors flowing into Maumee Bay and Lake Erie along the coastal plain of eastern Lucas County.

As Toledo grew into a major port and industrial city, its rivers and the lakefront served as transportation and commercial corridors. Now is the time to reexamine the role and function of Toledo's water resources so that they can better contribute to the improvement of regional water quality and expand the region's portfolio of recreational resources. In so doing, these water resources can make a significant contribution to the image and attractiveness of the region - enhancing the quality of life for local citizens and attracting a new generation of talent, drawn to the region by the resources that encourage an active outdoor lifestyle.



Wolf Creek



Tenmile Creek

DISTRICTWIDE GUIDELINES

Districtwide guidelines have been developed to help decision makers, including Metroparks and stakeholders working in partnership with Metroparks, select and prioritize initiatives involving resource protection, connectivity, and water access. As guidelines, they are simple, straightforward and universally applicable throughout Lucas County and the Greater Toledo Region. The guidelines also serve as a checklist to be used to determine the extent to which future land acquisitions by the park district are in alignment with, and reinforce the agency's mission and goals.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

The preservation of the region's natural environment, including promotion of its diversity, visibility, accessibility and understanding, are at the core of the Metroparks mission. Protecting the region's natural assets for current and future generations will enhance the lives of the residents and positively impact the perception of the Toledo area.

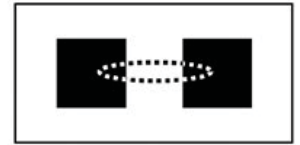
Adjacent Land Areas

One method of enhancing a natural area's function within the context of a larger ecosystem is through the preservation of adjacent land or water resources. Expanding existing landholdings can often make them easier to manage, enhance their ecological viability, and provide new recreational opportunities for park visitors. A high priority should be placed on the preservation (either through acquisition or other means of protection) of ecologically significant lands adjacent to Metroparks properties. Consideration should also be given to protecting ecologically sensitive land resources adjacent to other protected parklands or preserves with high natural value.



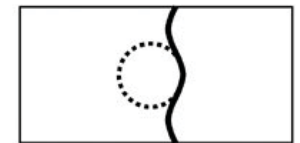
Linking Open Space: Land Corridors

Connecting parks, preserves and larger open spaces can expand wildlife habitat, visitor experience, and visual continuity. The connections do not necessarily require 'buildable' attributes. Connecting land corridors can be steeply sloped, flat, in a floodplain, agricultural or even historically industrial in character. Utility is derived from the land's potential to connect existing natural areas. These corridors can be owned, co-owned, leased, protected by easement, or managed by Metroparks or a partner organization.



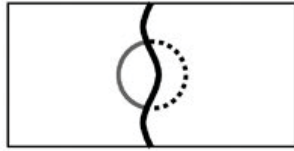
Water Frontage

Among the region's most valuable natural assets, as noted throughout this *Tomorrow Plan*, are Lake Erie, its shoreline and the streams that flow into Maumee Bay. Today, the public has limited access to large sections of Northern Maumee Bay, as well as the Maumee and Ottawa Rivers. Land with waterfront access along Lake Erie, the Maumee and Ottawa Rivers and Swan Creek represent high priority targets for protection, either through acquisition, the establishment of public easements, or long term lease agreements.



View Shed

In many instances, the quality of the visitor experience within parklands and preserves



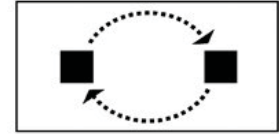
is at least in part, a function of the view shed that extends beyond the park boundary. The extended view beyond park boundaries should, whenever possible, complement rather than detract from the nature experience within the park. Preservation of lands that complete a scenic view, can function as buffer zones around parklands reducing the impact of high density or otherwise less compatible surrounding land uses. This guideline tends to be most applicable in unincorporated areas where zoning regulations are often less stringent and the challenges of preventing development from encroaching are greater. Conversely, in heavily urbanized and industrial areas, parklands typically function as view shed buffers. Finally, because views across the Maumee River are so important to the quality of the visitor experience at Bend View and other parks along the river, view shed protection opportunities outside Lucas County should also be considered.

Completing the Story: The Historic Perspective

There is a link between Metroparks' role as a steward of Toledo Area natural assets and the role those assets played in shaping the region's history. The protection of natural features that were instrumental in defining events of the past remain relevant today and should be given consideration when evaluating resource protection options. An excellent example is Fort Miamis. Built by the British in 1794, the fort was located in a natural setting on the banks of the Maumee River to hold the Maumee Valley and stop General Anthony Wayne's troop activity. Today this small park commemorates a key chapter in the nation's history and the history of this country's Native American tribes.

CONNECTIVITY

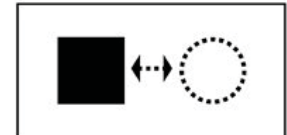
The highest rated activity documented in the 2013 Metroparks Needs Survey was walking/ hiking.



Walking is a basic form of exercise that contributes to a healthier lifestyle and plays an important role in strengthening neighborhoods. Establishing a coherent and accessible network of paths, trails, walkways and blueways will afford Lucas County residents greater access to Metroparks and other recreational / natural resources.

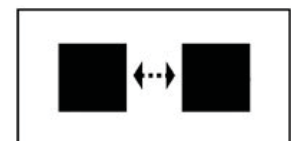
Park to Population

A high priority should be placed on connecting residential communities, regardless of their density or demographic characteristics, to Metroparks and other natural areas. It is a long term goal of this *Tomorrow Plan* for all Toledo area residents to have ready access to the natural assets of the region. Currently, the majority of the County's population is concentrated relatively close to the city center of Toledo, while the greatest concentration of Metroparks acreage is in the suburban and rural areas of the county. The University / Parks Trail, and its proposed extension to the west, is an important first step in connecting neighborhoods and parks. Completion of the Chessie Circle Trail and a full range of other proposed trails described in the District Plans which follow, will allow the potential number of users to grow throughout Lucas County.



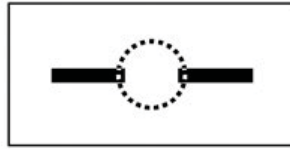
Park to Park

Linkages from one park to another increase the value of each landholding. In essence, by linking parks, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. With the creation of a connecting trail, two parks can function as one and provide more options for activities and greater ecological diversity. For example, there is greater potential to expand Metroparks' educational mission within the Oak Openings Region by connecting Oak Openings Preserve and Secor Metroparks through the Oak Openings Corridor.



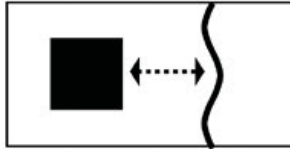
Trail to Trail

As individual trails, paths, walkways and blueways are developed, more Lucas County residents can be served. The long term goal is a complete network of Lucas County trails that in time will link with regional and national trail systems including the North Coast Inland Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail.



Park to Water's Edge

Envisioning the Toledo area's rivers and streams as a readymade set of water trails or blueways, facilitates county wide connectivity while serving a growing demand for recreational canoeing and kayaking. An essential step in creating a network of blueways involves connecting existing parks to the water. Wherever parks are located on or close to the Ottawa and Maumee Rivers, Tenmile Creek, Swan Creek, and the Lake Erie shoreline, they should incorporate launch points with adequate parking to accommodate non-motorized recreational watercraft. In addition to providing active recreation enthusiasts access to an emerging network of blueways, the provision of in-park access points will also afford park visitors a waterborne introduction to the riparian and coastal ecology of the region.



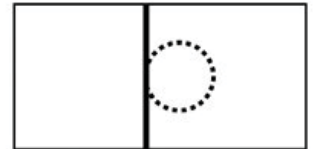
Along the Water

Traveling down Lucas County's rivers and creeks and into the waters of Lake Erie, offers park visitors a unique perspective on the natural heritage of the region. Continued emphasis will need to be placed on the creation of blueway routes to complement the county's land based trail system. The local promotion of blueways represents a viable opportunity for Metroparks.



Resting Points

Enjoyment of nature from a trail system (land or water based) can be enhanced with resting points along the way. Protected rest areas should be established, and wherever possible, highlight important ecological or geographic features. Occurring at regular intervals, these points make trail use accessible to all.



WATER ACCESS

Improving public access to the waters of Lucas County is a fundamental theme emphasized throughout this *Tomorrow Plan*. Lake and riverfront access enhances the user value of the park system, and should be encouraged at all existing and future parks and preserves with access potential.

Parks

Whenever possible, Metroparks should seek opportunities to enhance public exposure to the water's edge through the creation of stream bank or waterfront observation areas. In addition to evaluating the riparian or shoreline protection value of future park property, consideration should be given to the land's potential for accommodating public waterfront access.



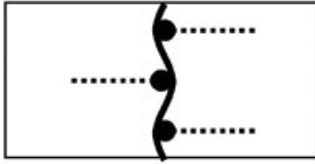
Parallel Trails

Trails that run parallel to the water's edge are highly desirable and should be provided wherever topography and geotechnical conditions permit, notwithstanding locations where the high cost of engineered solutions, e.g. large retaining walls, are ecologically intrusive and/ or cost prohibitive. An excellent existing example is the Towpath Trail passing through and linking Providence, Bend View, and Farnsworth Metroparks, which has multiple access points and follows the natural course of the Maumee River bank.

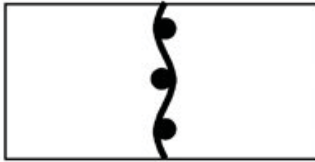


PORTALS

Single access points or portals are an alternative approach to providing access to the water's edge, and should be encouraged wherever feasible. They can offer experiences comparable to those offered on paralleling trails, and can be introduced where continuous streamside or shoreline properties or easements cannot be secured. Typically, single access points originate at a park, street or parking lot and provide pedestrian and/or boat access, limited fishing, and observation opportunities.



Discussed earlier, a second portal type is one accessible only from a water trail or blueway. Water trail portals should be encouraged because they provide safe stopping points along the blueway. They can be modest in scale, with limited amenities, and may or may not require connection to inland park properties. Audubon Islands State Nature Preserve is a good example of this second portal type.



Kayaking



Maumee River at Blue Grass

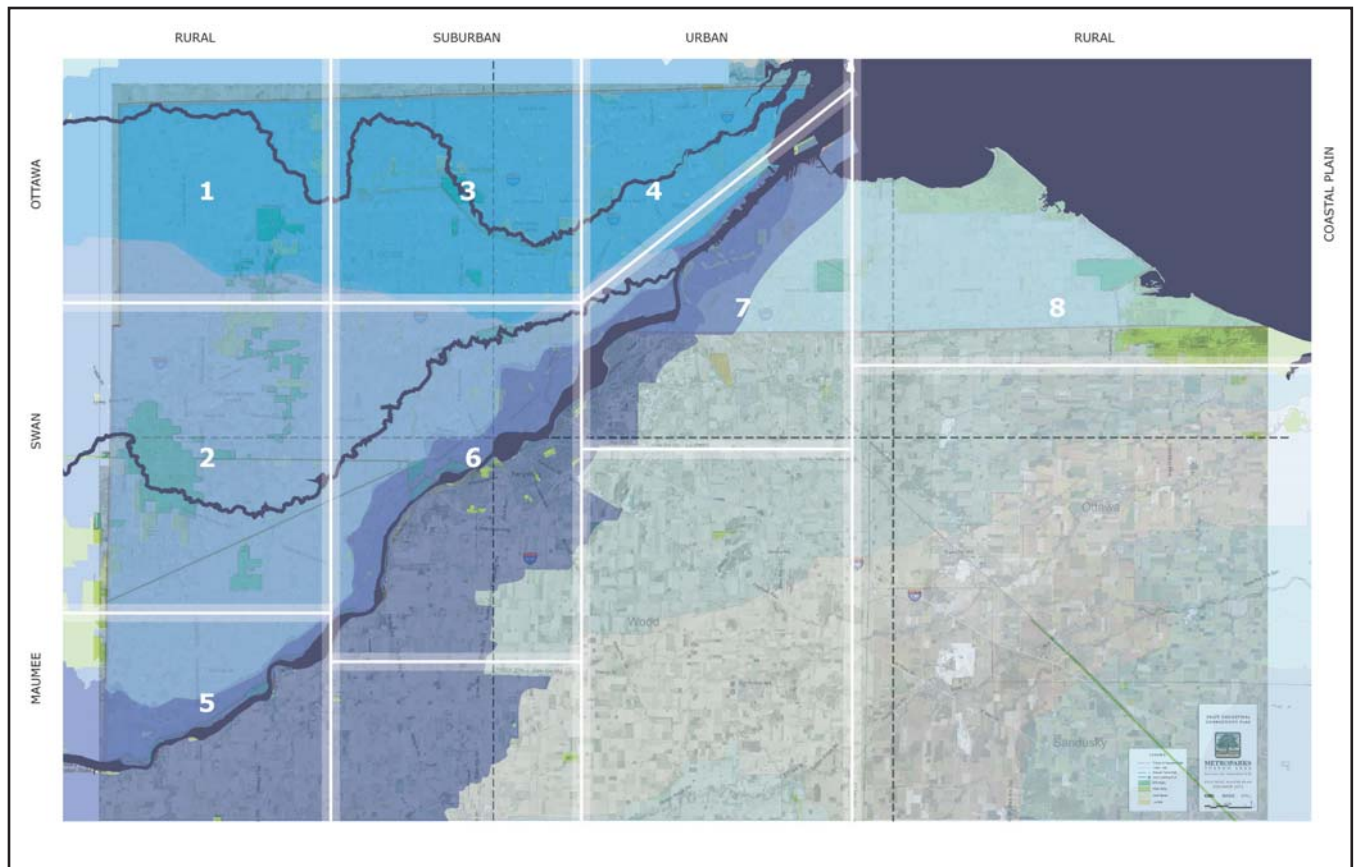


Figure 4-1. District boundaries

DEFINING DISTRICTS – A NEW CONTEXT FOR PLANNING

For the purposes of this plan, Lucas County is divided into eight planning sub-regions referred to districts. Guidelines within each district broadly define areas of focus that will help shape and prioritize future Metroparks initiatives. These initiatives will be based on a number of integrated actions that occur within specific planning districts of the County. To better articulate these recommended actions, this final chapter of the *Future Plan* presents location-specific recommendations associated with the County's unique natural and developmental characteristics.

The eight sub-regions or districts shown in Figure 4-1 differentiate urban, rural, and suburban areas of the county and are defined by the predominant watershed within each district: Ottawa River / Tenmile Creek, Maumee River, Swan Creek, or the coastal plains of eastern Lucas County. The Oak Openings Region is a dominant natural feature within several districts and is specifically called out where relevant.

DISTRICT 1:

OAK OPENINGS / TENMILE CREEK – RURAL

The primary goal for District 1 is to establish Secor Metropark as a prominent destination and visitor attraction in the northwest quadrant of Lucas County, functioning as a gateway to the Oak Openings Region and a link between the Oak Openings Corridor and the Ottawa River / Tenmile Creek Corridor.

Key Objectives:

1. Protect and restore the Tenmile Creek stream corridor
2. Provide a gateway portal to the Oak Openings Region
3. Provide a direct link between the University / Parks Trail, the Oak Openings Corridor, and Tenmile Creek

To achieve these objectives the following specific actions are recommended:

RESOURCE PROTECTION

Tenmile Creek is the main upstream tributary feeding the Ottawa River. Within District 1, much of Tenmile Creek serves as the primary drainage way for the district's agricultural lands. To improve the stream's ecological health and protect downstream water quality, Metroparks should work with local partners such as the Lucas Soil and Water Conservation District to promote agricultural conservation practices that protect the stream's water quality and create greater awareness of its importance as a significant natural asset in the northwest quadrant of Lucas County.

With an expanded role for Secor, Metroparks should work with partners through the Green Ribbon Initiative to encourage compatible land uses and habitat restoration on key private landholdings within the planning district such as Spuyten Duyval Golf Course and other lands adjacent to Secor. Currently, the Green Ribbon Initiative actively promotes these efforts through the Oak Openings Landowner Registry Program and through voluntary habitat management agreements between private landowners and The Nature Conservancy.

Consideration should be given to the potential expansion of Secor's natural areas through future acquisition of adjacent properties, should they become available. Additionally, lands within the floodplain extending southwest of Secor along Prairie Ditch have limited development potential, and may be viable for ecosystem restoration, enhancing connectivity into the northern reaches of the Oak Openings Corridor.

CONNECTIVITY

A trail linking Secor Metropark to the Oak Openings Corridor should be established consistent with the general route locations recommended in the site specific plans prepared as a companion document to this *Future Plan* (see Figure 4-2. District 1). Metroparks should work with other public agencies in the district (notably Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Olander Park System) to create linkages for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles with emphasis on establishing portals into the different ecosystems that characterize the Oak Openings Region and Tenmile Creek. Establishing a trail connection between Secor Metropark and the current western terminus of University / Parks Trail will open the Oak Openings to an expanded population and build on regional connectivity goals shared by multiple organizations and agencies across Lucas County.

The most feasible route for this trail connection is through the proposed development of bike lanes along Kilburn Road which would provide a direct connection north from the main entrance of Secor to several parks within the Olander Park System. This bike lane project is identified as a priority project in the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Government's (TMACOG) 'On the Move: 2007-2035 Transportation Plan.'

As well as working to encourage completion of the Kilburn Road bike lanes project, Metroparks should work with the Olander Park System, the Lucas County Commissioners, and the Ohio EPA to establish a safe trail connection across the former King Road Landfill, linking the existing University / Parks Trail with Secor Metropark through the Olander Park System.

WATER ACCESS

Access to Tenmile Creek is currently limited. Therefore it is important to establish portals into and along the creek where feasible to allow public access to this natural resource where there is almost none today.

PARTNERSHIPS

In order to accomplish the key objectives identified for District 1, Metroparks should develop and maintain collaborative working relationships with the following partner organizations: the Green Ribbon Initiative (and its constituent organizations including ODNR, Black Swamp Conservancy, and The Nature Conservancy), the Olander Park System, Richfield Township Trustees, TMACOG, Lucas County Commissioners, and the Lucas Soil and Water Conservation District.

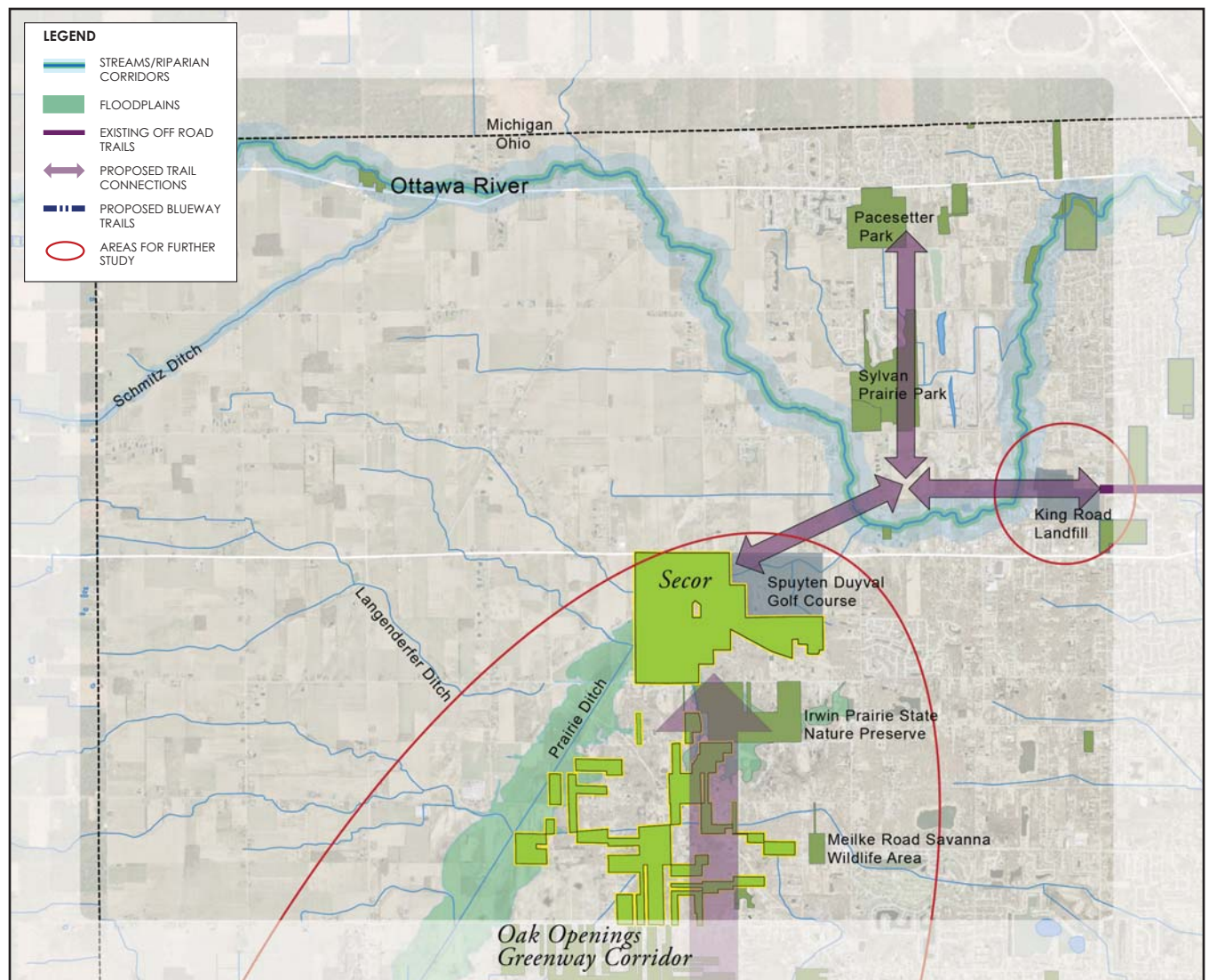


Figure 4-2. District 1 – Upper Ottawa Rural District map

DISTRICT 2:

OAK OPENINGS / SWAN CREEK – RURAL

The principal goal for District 2 is to protect, restore, and connect the highest quality examples of the natural assets within the Oak Openings Region and Swan Creek stream corridor.

Key Objectives:

1. Expand Metroparks' commitment to restore and manage the Oak Openings Region's ecological resources
2. Connect key Metroparks land holdings with the region's other significant natural areas
3. Protect and restore the ecological integrity of Swan Creek and its tributaries

To achieve these objectives, the following specific actions are recommended:

RESOURCE PROTECTION

With the inclusion of Blue Creek Metropark and the Oak Openings Corridor in this planning district, over half of all Metroparks landholdings occur within this District 2. This fact illustrates the significance of Metroparks' stewardship role within this planning district. District 2 also includes the largest concentration of other protected conservation lands within the Oak Openings Region including multiple parcels owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy and Ohio Department of Natural Resources. While not managed for conservation purposes, Toledo Express Airport and its surrounding natural lands feature additional high quality ecological resources worthy of protection.

Metroparks should work with these agencies and other partner organizations within the Green Ribbon Initiative to develop collective strategies for resource protection and restoration wherever possible and establish a recognizable presence for the ecologically based Oak Openings Corridor extending from Oak Openings Preserve north to Secor Metropark. While Metroparks has acquired and protected numerous properties within the corridor, acquisition of additional parcels is still necessary to protect and/or connect the existing land holdings and maximize the recreational potential of the Corridor.

Swan Creek bisects the district, yet its presence is not well recognized. It is recommended that Metroparks become a voice for its protection and restoration. The creek's headwaters are located west of the planning district, and much of it still flows through land that remains in agricultural use. To the extent that development pressure mounts and the land uses change, an effort must be made to buffer the creek from development, restore the native stream corridor habitat and create opportunities for public access through easements and cooperative agreements.

CONNECTIVITY

Located within the Oak Openings, Toledo Express Airport totals approximately 1,800 acres. Where publicly accessible, this land could be instrumental in providing a physical link between Oak Openings Preserve and the northern portion of the Oak Openings Corridor. A trail connector north of the airport paralleling the orientation of the airport's main runway would complement the east – west orientation of the Wabash Cannonball Trail, which currently serves as the primary regional trail within the planning district.

Throughout District 2, it will be important to identify portals, or designated points of entry, as a means of increasing visitor access to unique sections of the Oak Openings Corridor and to better acquaint the public with the attributes of the Oak Openings Ecosystem (see Figure 4-3. District 2). A more comprehensive assessment of opportunities to improve connectivity within the southern half of the Oak Openings Greenway Corridor is included in the Site Specific Planning component of the Metroparks Comprehensive Plan - prepared as a companion document to this *Future Plan*.

Swan Creek spans all of District 2 and should be considered a principal east-west connector. While it is of primary importance to preserve the ecological integrity of the Swan Creek stream corridor, in time, efforts should focus on providing public access to the water and along the creek's banks. As a tributary to Swan Creek, Blue Creek's presence in the district should be enhanced as it flows north from Blue Creek Metropark to the south fork of the Wabash Cannonball Trail. On the edge of the Oak Openings, a trail connection along the banks of Blue Creek could be established to form a connection between Blue Creek Metropark and the Wabash Cannonball Trail.

WATER ACCESS

The feasibility of establishing a blueway trail connection between Oak Openings Preserve and Swan Creek Preserve for non-motorized recreational watercraft should be carefully evaluated. The use of kayaks on the creek and bicycles on the Wabash Cannonball Trail would promote water access to and through the central and southern portions of western Lucas County.

PARTNERSHIPS

Conservation efforts within the Oak Openings are a model of interagency cooperation. For continued success, it will be critical to maintain partnerships with the Green Ribbon Initiative, Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority, local elected officials, TMACOG and other open space stewards representing conservation interests within the Oak Openings Corridor.

Blue Creek Metropark is a reflection of a partnership that includes Metroparks of the Toledo Area, the Village of Whitehouse, Nature's Nursery, the Lucas Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Anthony Wayne Youth Foundation. Continuing this partnership will be essential as plans to implement improvements at Blue Creek Metropark advance.

To spearhead interest and develop recommendations to protect the upper Swan Creek stream corridor, new partnerships will need to be formed. Toward that end, implementation of the initiatives identified in the Maumee Area of Concern (AOC) Stage 2 Restoration Plan is strongly encouraged.

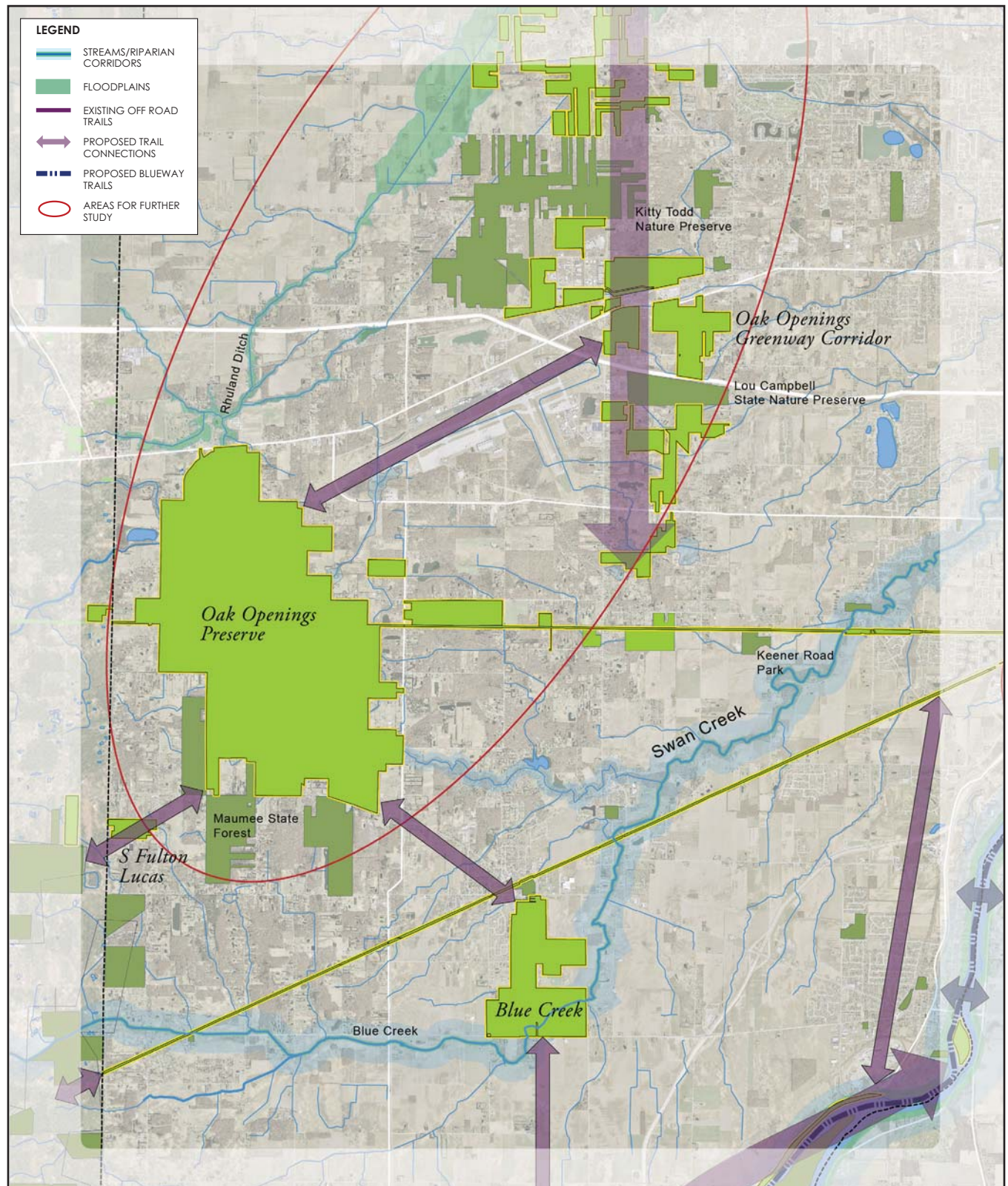


Figure 4-3. District 2 – Swan Creek Rural District map

DISTRICT 3: OTTAWA RIVER – SUBURBAN

The principal goal for District 3 is to unite open space holdings and area residents along the Ottawa River Corridor.

Key Objectives:

1. Preserve the natural integrity of existing parks and open spaces
2. Connect the individual institutional land owners along the Ottawa River Corridor
3. Enhance working partnerships with institutional and community stakeholders

To achieve these objectives, the following specific actions are recommended:

RESOURCE PROTECTION

The district is rich in existing parks and open spaces. Camp Miakonda, Wildwood Preserve, the University of Toledo campus, Ottawa Park and the greenways that wind through suburban Ottawa Hills, are all pearls on the Ottawa River necklace. Large tracts of undeveloped land along the Ottawa River not currently under public ownership should be protected whenever possible. Camp Miakonda, in close proximity to Wildwood Preserve along the Ottawa River, is a prime example of a high value preservation target within the district.

The future Metropark to be established at the former Keil Farm is one of the few open spaces along the heavily developed Reynolds Road commercial corridor. This property provides visual relief, wildlife habitat and stormwater management capacity in an area where these attributes are in short supply. Full consideration should be given to its future expansion in accordance with recommendations included in the Site Specific Planning component of the Metroparks Comprehensive Plan - prepared as a companion document to this *Future Plan*.

The Ottawa River stream corridor is the natural feature that unifies this district. It is important to preserve the natural character of the corridor throughout its length in the district through application of streamside setbacks or appropriate zoning provisions supported by TMACOG, Lucas County, the cities of Sylvania, Ottawa Hills and Toledo and / or agreements with private land owners.

CONNECTIVITY

The University / Parks Trail, one of Lucas County's regional paved trails, parallels the Ottawa River linking Wildwood Preserve and Ottawa Park with the University of Toledo. It is recommended that Toledo Botanical Garden and the former Keil Farm be integrated into the open space system through direct trail connections to the University / Parks Trail. Toledo Botanical Garden can be linked via a corridor in the vicinity of Elmer and Regency Drives. A link to the former Keil Farm may require easement negotiations or collaborations involving several land owners including Inverness Club and Healthcare REIT (see figure 4-4. District 3).

As Lucas County's most significant new trail initiative, progress toward the completion of the Chessie Circle Trail must be expedited. Upon completion, this key north – south pedestrian and bicycle route will link the Ottawa River, University / Parks Trail, Swan Creek and the Maumee River.

WATER ACCESS

Wherever publicly owned parkland is set aside along suburban reaches of the Ottawa River, public access points should be encouraged as nodes along in-park trail systems. Ideally, over the long term, a continuous walking trail parallel to the banks of the river should be provided. The district should also serve as the uppermost portal for a water trail or blueway along the Ottawa River. This trail could start and be accessed in the western suburbs, wind through important open spaces and institutions and ultimately emerge at the mouth of the Ottawa River in North Maumee Bay. Along the river's length, it will be important to provide visual portals for orientation. Only through repeating glimpses of the river will the public come to understand its breadth and influence on their lives.

PARTNERSHIPS

There are many important institutional landowners in District 3 and it is essential that Metroparks continues to forge strong working relationships with all of them. Many of these stakeholders have major landholdings in the district including the City of Toledo (Ottawa Park), ProMedica, the University of Toledo, Healthcare REIT, and Inverness Club. Integrated investments in the preservation of the Ottawa River corridor will pay dividends to each and every stakeholder, as their partners, members, clients, and employees all benefit from the expansion of the district's recreational resources.

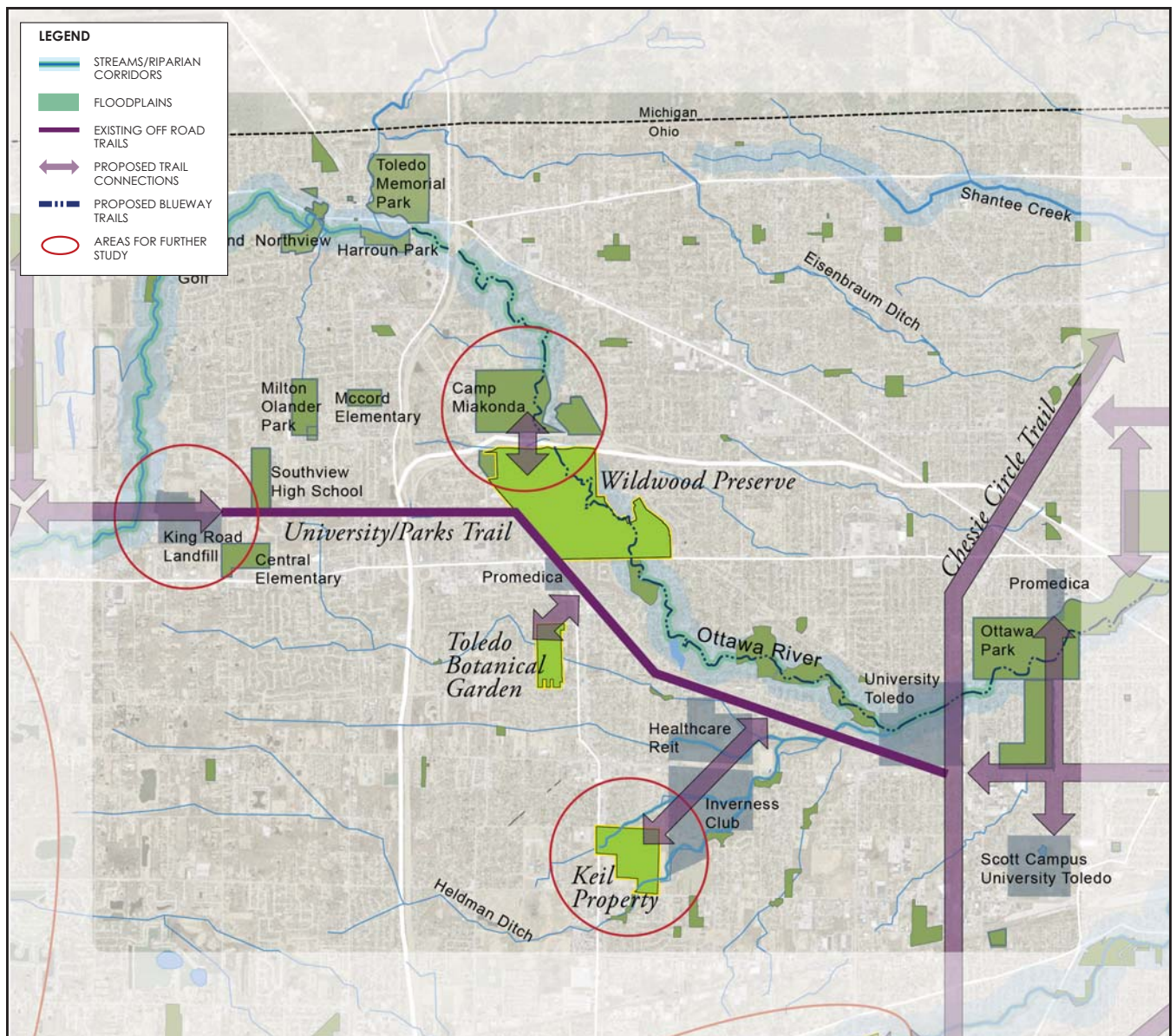


Figure 4-4. District 3 – Ottawa River Northern Suburban Zone map

DISTRICT 4: OTTAWA RIVER – URBAN

The principal goal for District 4 is to reclaim the industrialized reach of the Ottawa River as a natural recreational asset serving the residents of both the City of Toledo and the Greater Toledo Area.

Key Objectives:

1. Advance Metroparks stewardship role in the protection and restoration of the Ottawa River, Detwiler Ditch, and adjacent wetland communities including Manhattan Marsh
2. Facilitate new means of connecting neighborhoods to the Ottawa River and adjacent natural areas
3. Enhance the public's awareness of the ecological and recreational values of the Ottawa River and adjacent natural areas through the strengthening of public / private partnerships and community outreach.

To achieve these objectives, the following specific actions are recommended:

RESOURCE PROTECTION

There are no Metroparks landholdings within District 4 but there are a number of City of Toledo parks, remnant natural areas, and access to Lake Erie at north Maumee Bay. The Ottawa River and north Maumee Bay are the dominant natural features in the district. Additionally, there are remnants of Toledo's "Frogtown" wetland heritage within the District, notably Manhattan Marsh within the Detwiler Ditch drainage, which flows directly into north Maumee Bay.

Protection and restoration of the riparian habitat and shoreline ecosystems along the banks of the Ottawa River, along with adjacent Manhattan Marsh wetlands surrounding Detwiler Ditch must be encouraged and supported, with the goal of creating natural buffers between these natural areas and nearby industrial lands. It is recommended that wetlands hydrologically connected to Manhattan Marsh be protected to help secure the marsh's biological integrity. Where possible, it is also recommended that local access be established to enhance the marsh's value as an interpretive or environmental education resource.

The Ottawa River is an ecological, recreational and visual asset, particularly in the suburban and rural portions of Lucas County. As it flows downstream through the heavily industrialized portions of northeast Toledo, its asset values are masked by the industrial uses that flank its banks. It is recommended that setbacks be created as part of all redevelopment

planning for abandoned industrial sites, allowing native vegetation to be restored and public access accommodated wherever possible. Ultimately, within District 4, the Ottawa River, Manhattan Marsh, Bay View Park, Detwiler Park, Cullen Park and reclaimed industrial lands such as the former Jeep Plant parking lot could be managed as a continuous natural feature in a densely populated urban landscape.

CONNECTIVITY

The large and somewhat isolated populations of Northeast Toledo would benefit from improved access to existing and future natural areas along the river and the north Maumee Bay lakefront. Improved open space connectivity within the district can be achieved by working with the City of Toledo to improve and expand trail connections between Point Place and Manhattan Marsh on the east, and Ottawa Park to the west. This system would, in time, result in a continuous urban trail system connecting densely populated northeast Toledo communities to the Chessie Circle and University / Parks Trails. Ultimately, a trail network extending from Maumee Bay to the Oak Openings could be established (see Figure 4-5, District 4).

WATER ACCESS

An Ottawa River blueway, originating west of Wildwood Preserve and meandering through Ottawa and Jermain parks, should extend downstream to a Lake Erie blueway running south along the shoreline of north Maumee Bay. To insure safe passage for recreational boaters, the water trail would require the inclusion of portals at regular intervals, providing stopping points along the river with access to the land-side and in-park trails wherever feasible. It is important to note, however, that the establishment of an Ottawa River blueway along the lower reaches of the river can only be fully implemented when water quality improves and the contact advisory on the 8.6 mile section east of I-75 is lifted.

PARTNERSHIPS

Restoration of the Ottawa River and its tributaries can transform the visual character of the entire community and contribute to the improvement of the quality of life for all residents. It is recommended that Metroparks participate in the establishment of an integrated public / private Ottawa River partnership where the City of Toledo, local community development corporations, the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce and individual industrial / commercial stakeholders jointly address opportunities

described in this *Future Plan*. Additionally, this group should encourage cooperative efforts with the State of Michigan and shoreline communities surrounding North Maumee Bay to allow for improved public access to the waterfront and facilitate the ecological restoration of Silver Creek and Halfway Creek. Finally, all involved parties should work with the Ohio EPA, Partners for Clean Streams and TMACOG to implement the Maumee AOC Stage 2 Watershed Restoration Plan.

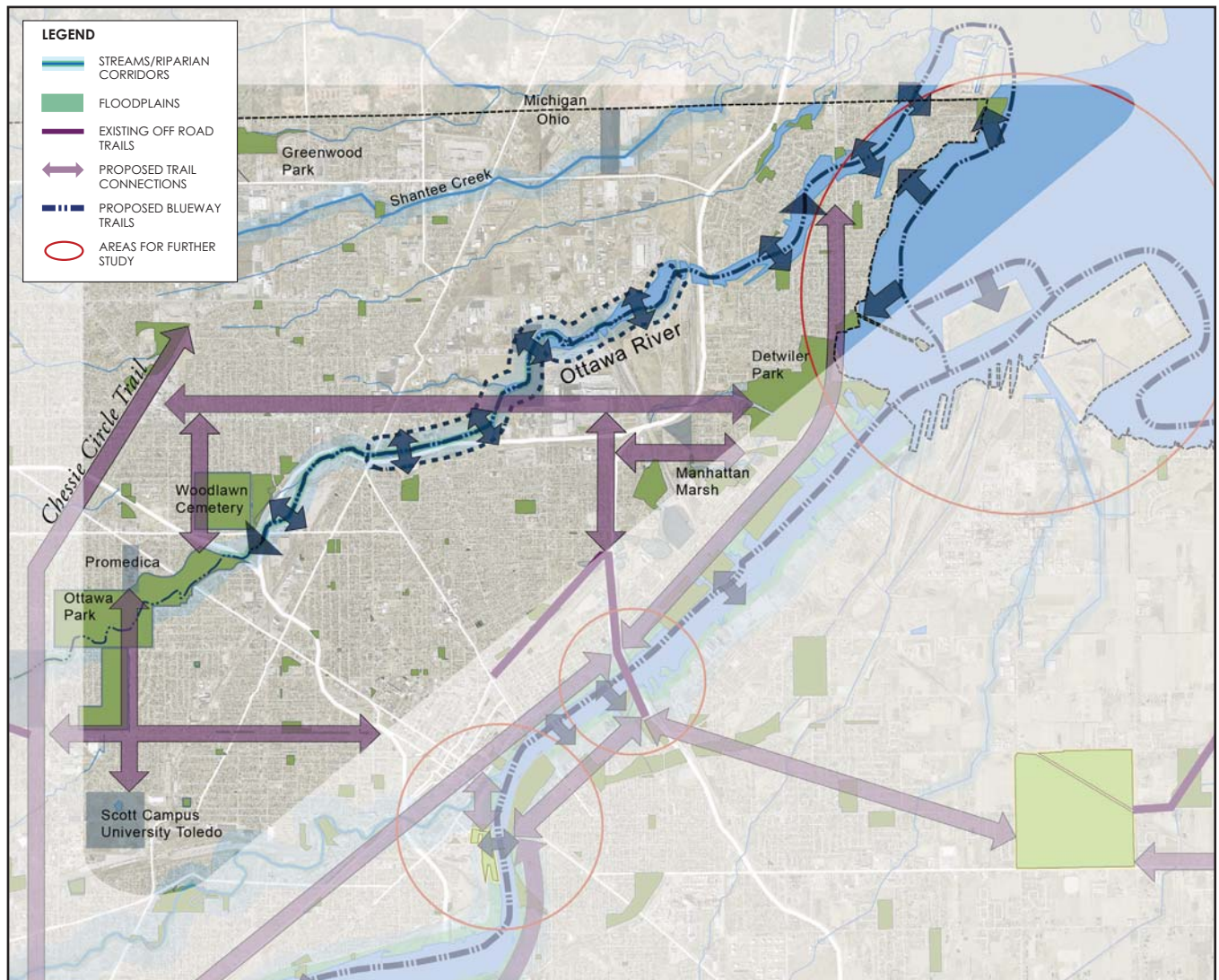


Figure 4-5. District 4 – Ottawa River Urban District map

DISTRICT 5: MAUMEE RIVER – RURAL

The principal goal for District 5 is to enhance the upper Maumee River's rich natural, historic and cultural heritage by expanding the river experience along the full extent of the Maumee River corridor (see Figure 4-6. District 5).

Key Objectives:

1. Expand riverfront landholdings for public use
2. Connect existing riverfront parks and establish connections from riverfront parks to other parklands
3. Pursue opportunities to protect the viewshed across the Maumee River from critical park locations.

To achieve these objectives, the following specific actions are recommended:

RESOURCE PROTECTION

The Maumee watershed is the largest contributor of fresh water flowing to the Great Lakes. Metroparks should continue supporting all initiatives, both local and regional, that encourage environmentally sound land use and development policies impacting land along the Maumee River and its tributaries.

Since the establishment of the park district, a sustaining series of investments have been made in riverfront parks along the north side of the Maumee River. Where land gaps in the system exist, efforts to acquire or otherwise protect undeveloped parcels along the Maumee River in Lucas County should remain a high priority for Metroparks. It is also recommended that full consideration be given to integrating existing Metroparks properties with natural areas and open space along the south side of the Maumee River. This would aid in protecting the quality of the visitor experience in existing Metroparks and would lead to the establishment of a true river corridor experience.

CONNECTIVITY

To enhance the value of the Towpath Trail, it is recommended that it be connected to recreational resources and culturally significant destinations above and below the segment of the Maumee River identified in District 5. To illustrate this point, Grand Rapids, the "head of the rapids" of the Maumee River, has been a strategic gathering place for hundreds of years, and Mary Jane Thurston State Park could potentially be accessed across the river via an on-road trail extension across the Grand Rapids bridge, thus broadening the Metroparks visitor experience.

In addition to expanding east-west connections along the Maumee River, it is recommended that Bend View and Blue Creek Metroparks be linked by either an on-road or dedicated trail to tie together two important Metroparks holdings. The availability of such a connection would ultimately encourage park visitors to utilize the south fork of the Wabash Cannonball Trail to access both Blue Creek Metropark and the Maumee River Corridor.

WATER ACCESS

Canoeing / kayaking on the Maumee is already a desirable recreational activity. It is recommended that an official blueway or water trail be established along the river between, and ultimately beyond, Metroparks' three riverfront parks within District 5. As with all water trails described in this *Future Plan*, it will be necessary to incorporate portals along the river to create safe landings and launch points. Ideally, as blueway activity expands, portals would be established on both sides of the river.

PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout the length of the Maumee, it is critical that Metroparks maintains close working relationships with township and village representatives as well as the Wood County Park District, to ensure that a high quality river experience is preserved and enhanced for all park visitors. It will also be important for Metroparks to work closely with Partners for Clean Streams (the successor to the Maumee River Remedial Action Plan Committee) to coordinate a full range of recommendations associated with improving water quality and protecting the ecological integrity of the Maumee. To assure that initiatives involving the protection of natural and cultural resources are effectively coordinated within District 5, Metroparks should also continue to actively engage with representatives of the Maumee Valley Heritage Corridor and the Black Swamp Conservancy.

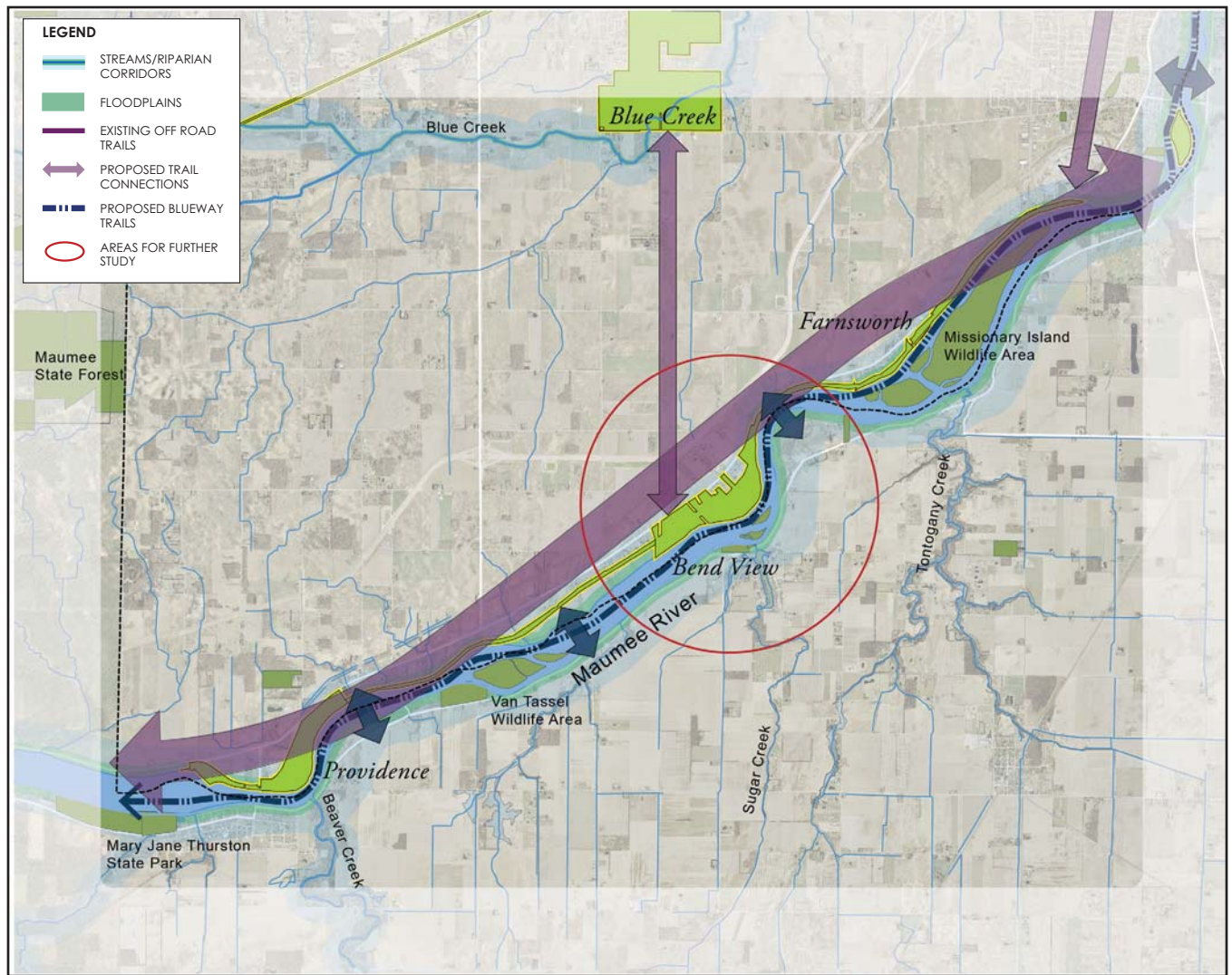


Figure 4-6. District 5 – Maumee River Rural District map

DISTRICT 6:

SWAN CREEK / MAUMEE RIVER – SUBURBAN

The principal goal for District 6 is to preserve, restore and enhance the environmental and cultural assets of the two river corridors by creating an integrated network of trail connections and activity nodes that enrich the visitor experience within the district.

Key Objectives:

1. Preserve and restore the riparian ecosystems within the Maumee River and Swan Creek corridors
2. Improve community access to the corridors and their natural and cultural assets
3. Establish a loop trail system that links the two river corridors and provides access to other major trails within Lucas County.

To achieve these objectives, the following specific actions are recommended:

RESOURCE PROTECTION

The Maumee River spring walleye run occurring within District 6 is nationally recognized as a premiere destination for sports fisherman, with an estimated half million walleye swimming through this section of the Maumee to spawn each year. Metroparks should continue supporting all initiatives, both local and regional, to sustain this tremendous ecological and recreational resource.

It is recommended that efforts be made to protect the viewshed across the Maumee River into Wood County. Measures to protect undeveloped lands in Wood County between the south bank of the Maumee River and Ohio Route 65 from future development would protect the undisturbed view across the river while preserving the natural stream bank. Because natural vegetation can slow flood waters, reduce erosion and provide natural habitat protection, Metroparks should support the adoption of streamside setbacks along the banks of the Maumee River on riverfront properties not already under public ownership.

As with the upper reaches of the Swan Creek, Metroparks' support of the initiatives identified in the Maumee AOC Stage 2 Watershed Restoration Plan is strongly encouraged. Restoration of riparian ecosystems with improved access to the water's edge along both the Maumee River and Swan Creek are essential to the enrichment of the visitor experience and should be actively supported by Metroparks. The establishment of riparian corridor buffers along Swan Creek, including protection of creek branches that extend west of the Anderson / Belt property (future Brookwood Center) to both Blue Creek Metropark and Oak Openings Preserve should be considered.

CONNECTIVITY

The existing bicycle and pedestrian bridge over U.S. Highway 24 linking Fallen Timbers Battlefield, the Fallen Timbers Monument and Side Cut Metropark is integral to linking the Maumee River corridor to the surrounding community and eventually to Swan Creek. It represents a critical infrastructure element and creates the opportunity to position Fallen Timbers Battlefield as a major hub on the county-wide trail network.

To link the river corridors, it is recommended that a long-term commitment be made to implementing a loop trail system that establishes a full connection between the Ottawa River and Swan Creek. The western segment of the loop would extend north from the Maumee River and Fallen Timbers Battlefield along a corridor generally defined by Jerome Road and Technology Drive, to a point north of the Ohio Turnpike where the trail would follow Swan Creek, eventually entering Swan Creek Preserve Metropark. Extensive commercial development and the dominance of traffic introduced by the Turnpike and I-475 present clear challenges to this plan. However, it is possible with long-term planning and interagency cooperation, to carefully weave trail segments through this area over time.

The Swan Creek Corridor should connect Swan Creek Preserve Metropark and the Anderson / Belt properties (i.e., Brookwood) with other significant natural land holdings along Swan Creek east to Highland Park. Institutional landowners within this corridor, including St. John's Jesuit High School and Academy, Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Services, Maumee Valley Country Day School, University of Toledo, Toledo Public Schools, and Hospice of Northwest Ohio should be fully engaged in the development of this corridor (see Figure 4-7. District 6).

A connection between the Swan Creek Corridor and the Chessie Circle Trail at the UT Health Sciences campus would establish a critical junction in a regional trail system extending north to the University / Parks Trail and south to the Maumee River. With the Chessie Circle Trail extending to the Maumee River corridor, the loop trail system could then provide access to parklands from the vicinity of Audubon Island to Sidecut Metropark including Fort Miamis, Fallen Timbers Monument and Fallen Timbers Battlefield. With a full return to the Fallen Timbers hub, direct access to the west and south would be provided via the north and south forks of the Wabash Cannonball Trail. To establish the critical link between the southern leg of the Chessie Circle Trail and the parks to the southwest along the Maumee River Corridor, it is recommended to evaluate the feasibility of using the Anthony Wayne Trail median as a possible pedestrian and bike trail.

Within District 6, several other connectivity opportunities should be explored to maximize visitor access to parks, natural areas and cultural resources. These include: 1) utilizing the Bluebird Rail Line to connect Metroparks' Maumee River parklands through the Village of Waterville and on to the Fallen Timbers hub, 2) Utilizing the trail loop system as the Toledo Area's entry node for the Ohio Buckeye Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail, and 3) establishing an historic and cultural trail linking Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Monument, through Side Cut Metropark, and over the Perrysburg - Maumee Bridge to connect with the Fort Meigs Museum and Visitor Center.

Site specific recommendations for Fallen Timbers Battlefield, Fort Miamis and the Brookwood Center pertaining to both preservation and connectivity are included in the Site Specific Planning component of the Metroparks Comprehensive Plan - prepared as a companion document to this *Future Plan*.

WATER ACCESS

It is recommended that a water-based version of an historic and cultural trail begin at Side Cut Metropark and extend to Blue Grass Island, Buttonwood Recreation Area, Tow Path Park, Audubon Islands Nature Preserve, Orleans Park and Fort Miamis. This blueway could incorporate the Wolcott House Museum in the City of Maumee as a resting point along the water route. Metroparks should also encourage the establishment of a Swan Creek Blueway that extends west to the north fork of the Wabash Cannonball Trail and east to downtown Toledo.

PARTNERSHIPS

Within the Maumee and Swan Creek corridors, it is critical that Metroparks maintains close working relationships with local communities as well as representatives of the City of Toledo, the University of Toledo, TMACOG, partners engaged in the completion of the Chessie Circle Trail, and Partners for Clean Streams. This recommendation includes working with local communities to implement recommendations identified in the Maumee AOC Stage 2 Watershed Restoration Plan. To assure that initiatives involving the protection of natural and cultural resources are effectively coordinated within District 6, Metroparks should actively engage with representatives of the Maumee Valley Heritage Corridor and the Black Swamp Conservancy to pursue conservation easements along the Maumee River.

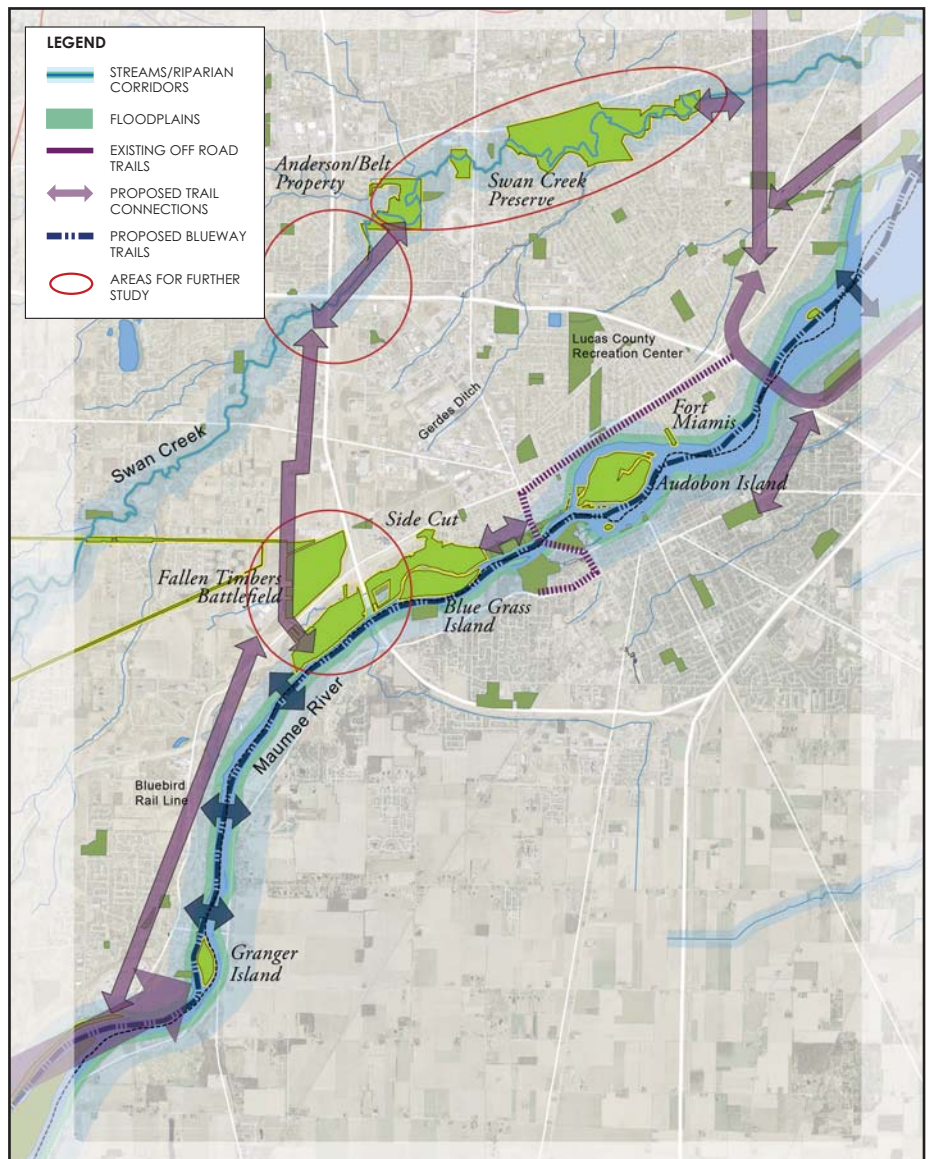


Figure 4-7. District 6 – Swan Creek/Maumee Suburban District map

DISTRICT 7:

SWAN CREEK / MAUMEE RIVER – URBAN

The principal goal for District 7 is to engage local residents with the region's natural assets and integrate those natural assets into the district's urban fabric.

Key Objectives:

1. Define and develop Metroparks' presence near Toledo's downtown neighborhoods
2. Establish connections to other Metroparks landholdings and open spaces to the west along the Swan Creek and Maumee River corridors
3. Create new river access and connections to blueway trails within the Toledo's urban center

To achieve these objectives, the following specific actions are recommended:

RESOURCE PROTECTION

Middlegrounds Metropark will be an important addition to the Metroparks system, providing a new access point to the natural shoreline of the Maumee River near downtown Toledo. Its presence represents a first step in preserving and restoring naturally vegetated stretches along the river's edge in heavily developed and environmentally degraded areas of Toledo. Accordingly, it should serve as a template for the preservation and restoration of additional publically accessible river frontage on both sides of the lower Maumee River. Restoration of riparian ecosystems with improved access to the water's edge along both the Maumee River and Swan Creek are essential to the enrichment of the visitor experience and should be actively supported by Metroparks.

At the entrance to Maumee Bay, Metroparks should encourage efforts to ensure that the two consolidated dredge spoil (CDF) facilities (Grassy Island and the active CDF to its east) are ultimately reclaimed as natural areas. Metroparks should evaluate the benefits of entering into a stewardship / cooperative agreement with other partners, allowing Metroparks to establish a visible presence on Grassy Island. Metroparks could help celebrate the entrance to Maumee Bay from downtown Toledo by participating in the establishment of a recognizable urban birding destination on the manmade island – a concept successfully modeled 115 miles to the east on the Dike 14 dredge disposal site near the entrance to Cleveland Harbor.

CONNECTIVITY

The City of Toledo, through its recent trail planning initiatives, has laid the groundwork for connecting residents in District 7 to Metroparks landholdings in the central and western portions of Lucas County. It is recommended that Metroparks partner to help the city succeed at this effort wherever possible.

As a partner, it is recommended that Metroparks enhance the functionality of the City's emerging urban trail network by establishing trailheads with limited parking at its future parks near the urban center (e.g. Middlegrounds, and potentially Manhattan Marsh). This urban trail system would link both sides of the lower Maumee River to the Ottawa River and Swan Creek. These connections would function as an "inner ring" trail or urban version of the Chessie Circle Trail that extends along the western edge of the City.

The existing Craig Bridge Trail pedestrian / bicycle route across the Maumee River adjacent to I-280 allows the communities on both sides of the river to function as one. It links to the City of Toledo trail systems along Summit Street which, when fully extended, can connect Manhattan Marsh, Bay View Park, and Grassy Island. It is reasonable to then focus on upgrading a trail link north to the Ottawa River, terminating in the vicinity of Harry Kessler Park. When fully implemented, these urban trails will serve to connect the Maumee River and Swan Creek trail systems to the Ottawa River trail system. From the Craig Bridge Trail across the Maumee River, a trail segment needs to be developed to connect Pearson Metropark with the Maumee River. This trail would serve south Toledo and connect the Maumee River with the natural areas of Lucas County's eastern coastal plains (see Figure 4-8. District 7).

The Toledo Zoo is the single most popular recreational destination in District 7. Metroparks is encouraged to collaborate with Zoo officials to incorporate the Zoo as a major trailhead along an expanded trail system within the district. To accomplish this, it is recommended that the existing off-road bicycle and walking trail along the Anthony Wayne Trail between the Zoo and Woodsdale Park be extended to the north. As a family friendly bikeway, an off road trail could run north along the Anthony Wayne Trail to a trailhead anchored by the Toledo Farmer's Market near the mouth of Swan Creek and the southern entrance to Downtown Toledo. While high traffic volumes and complex roadway geometry at the approach to Collingwood Boulevard make this a challenging concept, it would significantly expand outdoor recreational options within Toledo's urban center.

On the south side of the Maumee River, it is recommended that trails at the Marina District and International Park be connected to a new south-side trail that would follow pipeline rights-of-way parallel to the river, ultimately connecting with the Chessie Circle Trail "southern hook" (on the south side of the Maumee River) and Wood County Park District's W.W. Knight Preserve. From the W.W. Knight Preserve, opportunities to expand the Chessie Circle Trail east to Owens Community College should be explored.

Metroparks should give full consideration to supporting the extension of an Anthony Wayne Trail median pedestrian / bikeway trail south from the Toledo Zoo connecting to trail heads at Side Cut Metropark and the Wabash Cannonball Trail. Establishing this trail route would afford a viable connecting link for both the North Coast Inland Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail, positioning Toledo as the North Country Trail's principal trailhead in the eastern Great Lakes Region. The model of a well-utilized regional trail that could be replicated in the Toledo area runs from the Pittsburgh airport along the Great Allegheny Passage and C&O Canal directly into Washington D.C.'s Georgetown neighborhood.

WATER ACCESS

Both Swan Creek and the Maumee River, as they flow through District 7 into Maumee Bay, should be developed as urban blueway trails. Metroparks, working with the City of Toledo and Wood County representatives, is encouraged to assist in providing improved access and designated portals along both blueways. In so doing, the Maumee River and Swan Creek will take on new roles as unique community connectors that complement the function of inland trails.

As the Maumee blueway route continues downstream from Audubon Island to Middlegrounds Metropark, a number of new portals will need to be established to assure the safety of its users. With Middlegrounds as a trailhead, the route could then continue to the mouth of the river at Maumee Bay, with portals at Promenade and International Parks, Bay View Park, and Grassy Island. Along its more industrialized segments, roughly from Magnolia Street to Columbus Street, the rail line on the north side of the river will limit access to the river. There is, however, sufficient evidence drawn from recreational rowing activity on the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland Harbor and other port cities throughout the Great Lakes, that these use-based challenges can be managed.

Finally, it is recommended that smaller blueway loops be established until the more challenging downstream segments of this system can be developed. For example, from Middlegrounds, an alternate route can connect to the Swan Creek blueway trail. Existing Warehouse District activity and publically held land near the mouth of Swan Creek will allow establishment of this blueway fairly quickly and help direct the public's interest to the health of these long-neglected waterways.

PARTNERSHIPS

District 7 is the most intensively developed portion of Lucas County. Accordingly, a range of partnerships are necessary to capitalize on the investments made in Downtown Toledo in recent years and to continue downtown revitalization initiatives. While virtually all collaborative initiatives in the planning district will involve the City of Toledo, other important partners include the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority, the Toledo Warehouse District Association, the Downtown Toledo Improvement District, The Toledo Area Chamber of Commerce, and TMACOG.

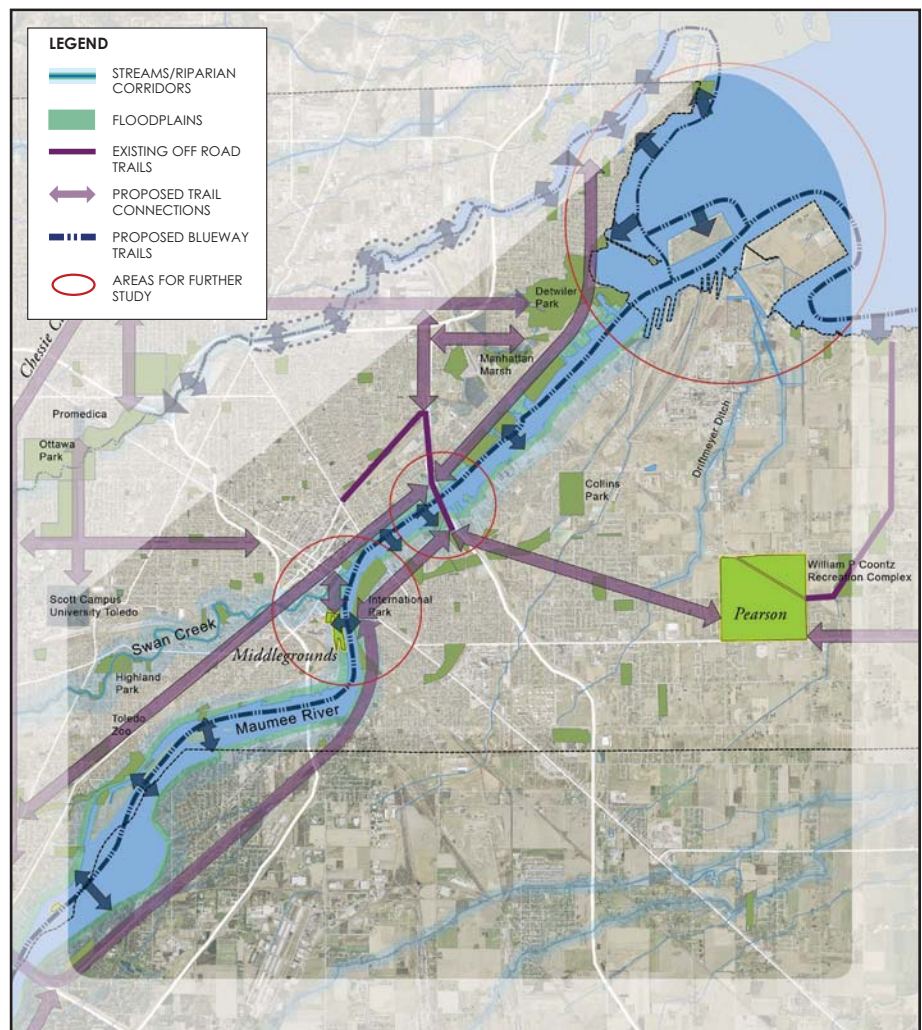


Figure 4-8. District 7 – Swan Creek/Maumee River Urban District map

DISTRICT 8: EASTERN COASTAL PLAINS – RURAL

The principal goal for District 8 is to establish Metroparks as an integral and important ecological and recreational resource that complements the existing State and Federal natural areas in the Eastern Coastal Plains.

Key Objectives:

1. Integrate the ecological management of all publicly held coastal marshlands and shorelines
2. Establish logical pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections to the district's recreational resources,
3. Provide safe water access along the Lake Erie shoreline.

To achieve these objectives, the following specific actions are recommended:

RESOURCE PROTECTION

The Eastern Lake Plains – Rural District accounts for nearly all of the publicly-owned lake frontage available in Lucas County. Parks and open space resources include Maumee Bay State Park, Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge, Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, and Magee Marsh Wildlife Area. Presently, more than half of the planning district's lake frontage is under public control. To help assure the protection and preservation of the district's natural character, Metroparks must continue its focus on expanding the public's understanding of, and appreciation for these valuable resources. It is also recommended that Metroparks work with local officials, public agencies and major land owners in support of measures to buffer industrial, residential and agricultural uses contributing to runoff that flows to the lake via drainage ditches and creeks.

While most of the waterways in District 8 are now man-made drainage swales or ditches, portions of Duck, Wolf, Turtle, Cedar and Otter creeks remain natural stream courses that flow directly into Lake Erie. It is recommended that Metroparks become an advocate for their protection where streamside setbacks and reintroduction of native habitat represent viable approaches to restoration.

CONNECTIVITY

It is recommended that Metroparks establish Pearson as the gateway to the lake front experience. From this location, driving, biking and hiking expeditions can originate. The existing off-road biking and hiking trail from Pearson to Maumee Bay State Park should be extended east along the state park and then southeast to Howard Farms and the wildlife areas along the shoreline. Ideally, a final leg of the trail (which could be a designated on-road bike route) could be established returning park visitors to Pearson Metropark.

The Eastern Coastal Plains is recognized both nationally and internationally as a major birding destination, showcased during the Biggest Week in American Birding, organized by the Black Swamp Bird Observatory as the largest birding festival in the United States. As such, establishing an off-road loop trail system would help to build on the success of the Biggest Week festival and unify the lake plains visitor experience (see Figure 4-9. District 8).

Howard Farms should become the blueway trailhead within the coastal plains region. Centrally located between the mouth of the Maumee and the Lucas County line, this portal should be promoted by Metroparks as an important countywide-kayaking destination as well as an anchor for the Lake Erie Blueway.

WATER ACCESS

The Lake Erie coastal plains ecosystem feature enormous wildlife habitat value and is internationally known for birding, hunting and fishing. It is recommended that a Lake Erie blueway be established and anchored at Howard Farms and that portals be established along the Lake Erie shoreline to the west at regular intervals to ensure safe passage. The water trail would then connect with the Maumee and Ottawa River Blueways within Toledo's Maumee Bay.

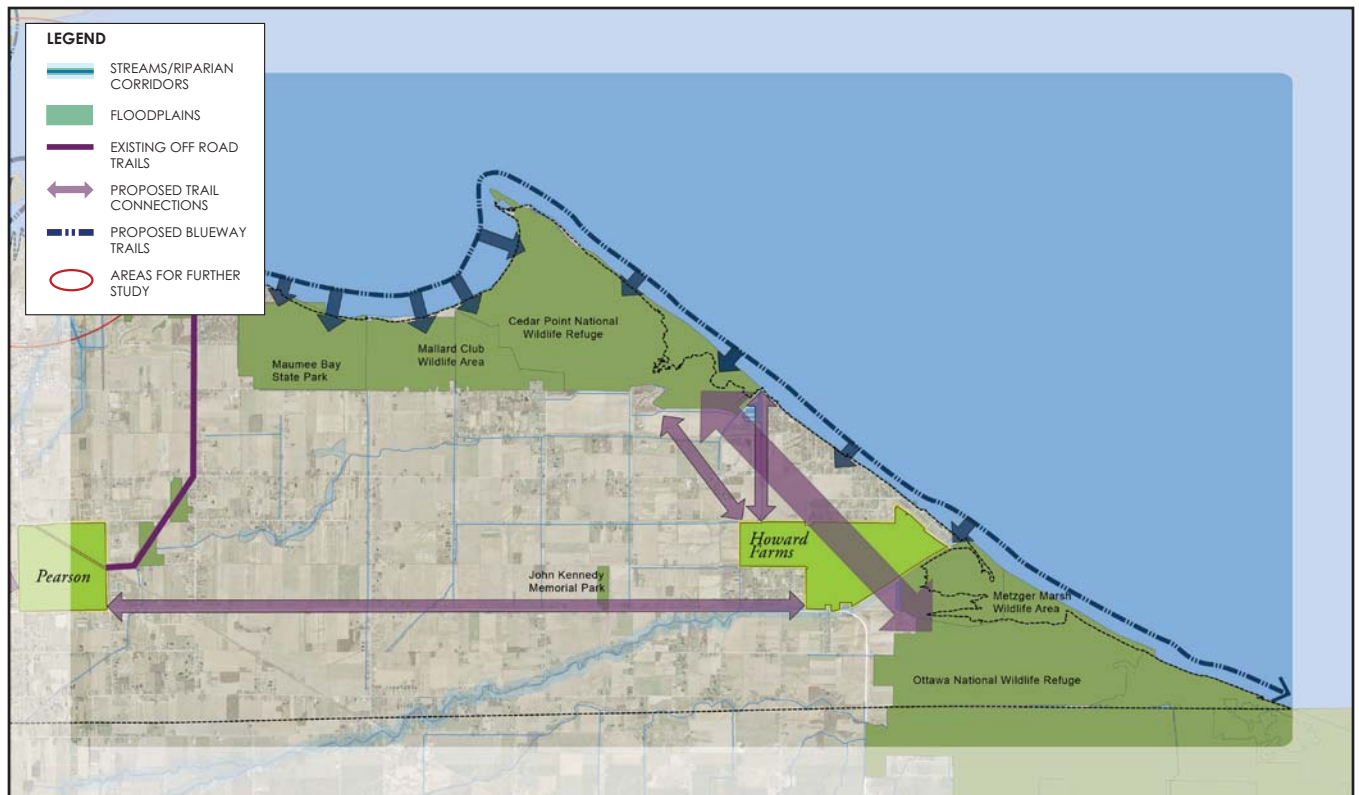


Figure 4-9. District 8 – Eastern Coastal Plain Rural District map

PARTNERSHIPS

The parks, wildlife areas, marshes and refuges all contribute significantly to the ecological integrity of the coastal plains. It is important to maintain strong working partnerships with State and Federal stakeholders in the planning district to help coordinate tourism, ecological management, and conservation efforts across the eastern coastal plains. Specifically, Metroparks is encouraged to continue collaborating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Cedar Point Wildlife Refuge and Ottawa Wildlife Refuge) and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife (Metzger Marsh, Mallard Club Marsh, and Magee Marsh Wildlife Areas), Ducks Unlimited, and Black Swamp Bird Observatory.

The establishment of new trails within the district will require cooperation between Metroparks, TMACOG, Lucas County, the City of Oregon, and Jerusalem Township.

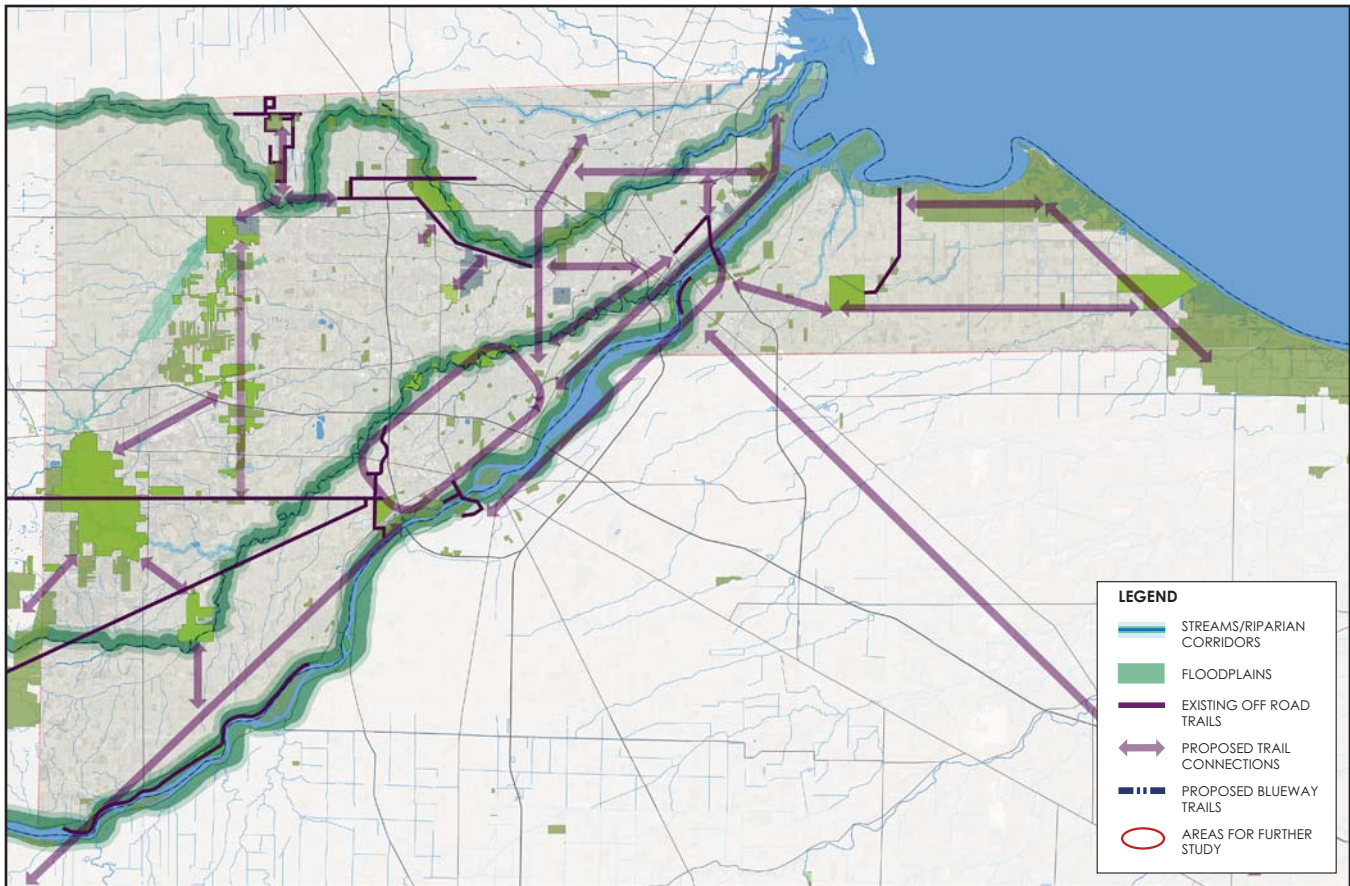


Figure 4-10. Unified Park System

A UNIFIED SYSTEM

Consolidating the goals, objectives and recommendations presented in the individual district plans yields a basic framework for connecting the region's natural assets, parks, and people. That framework is illustrated in Figure 4-10, and embodies the long range vision for a unified system of parks, preserves, greenways, and trails for Metroparks of the Toledo Area.

APPENDIX A – EXISTING CONDITIONS



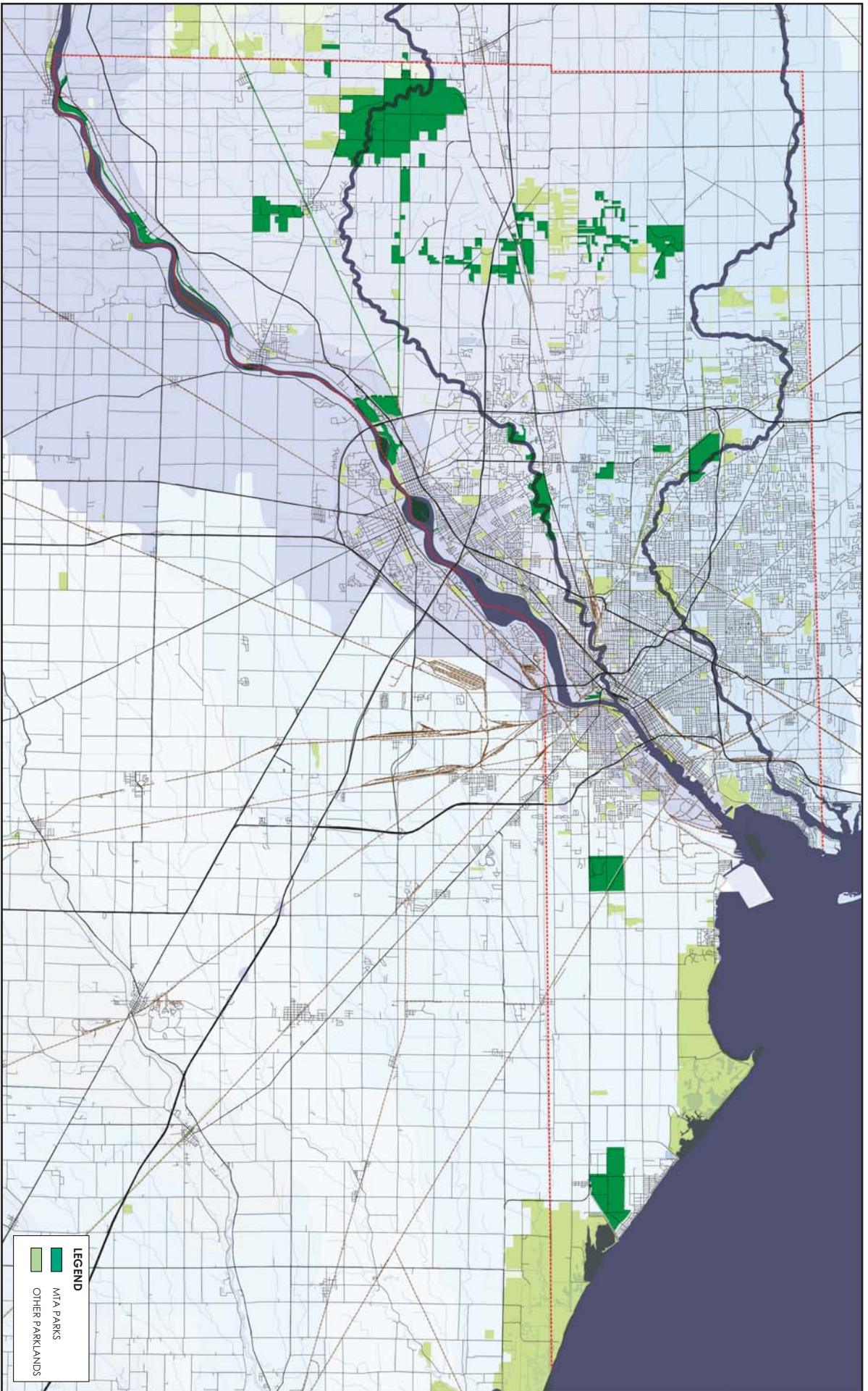


Figure 1-1. Existing Metroparks land holdings

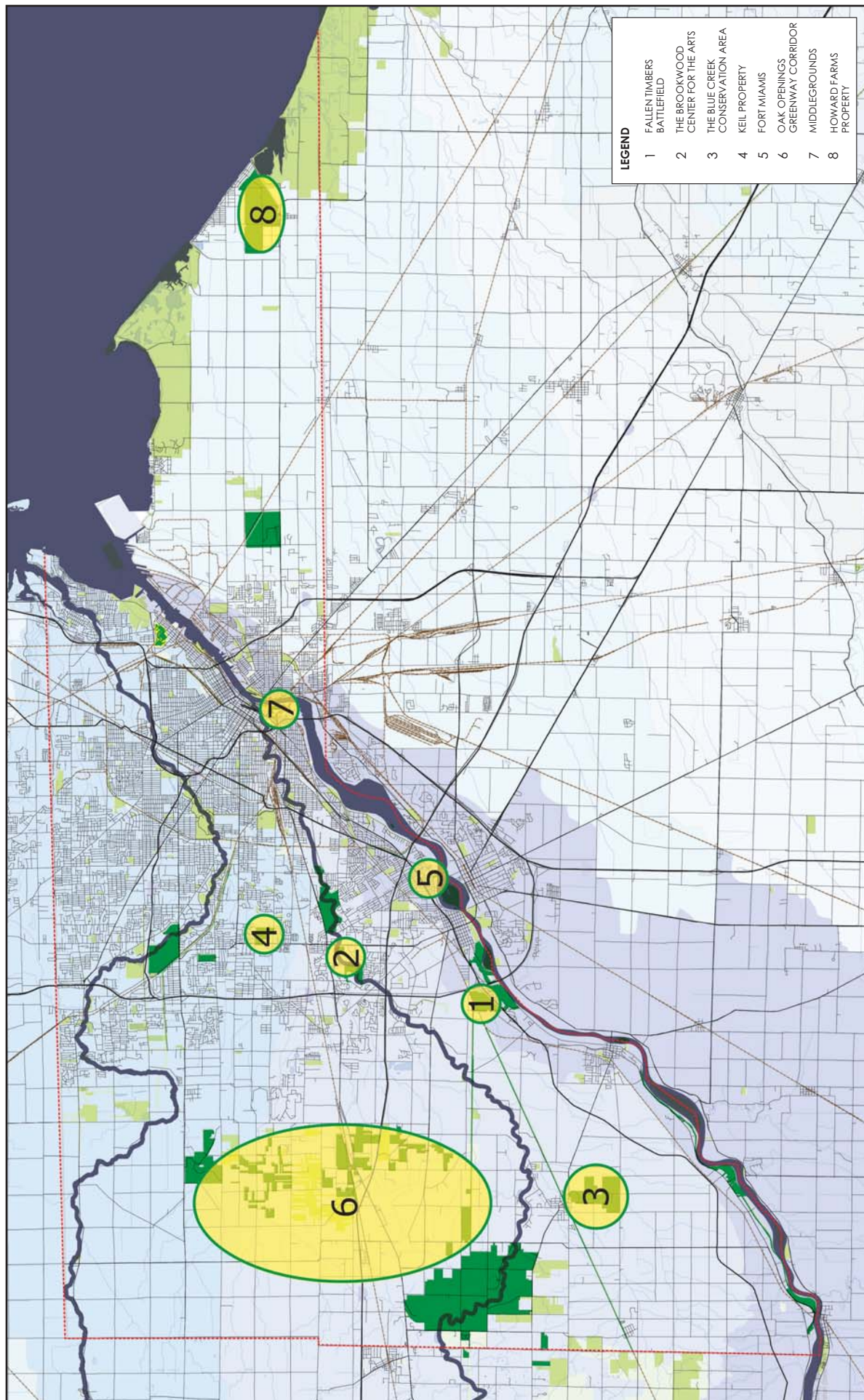
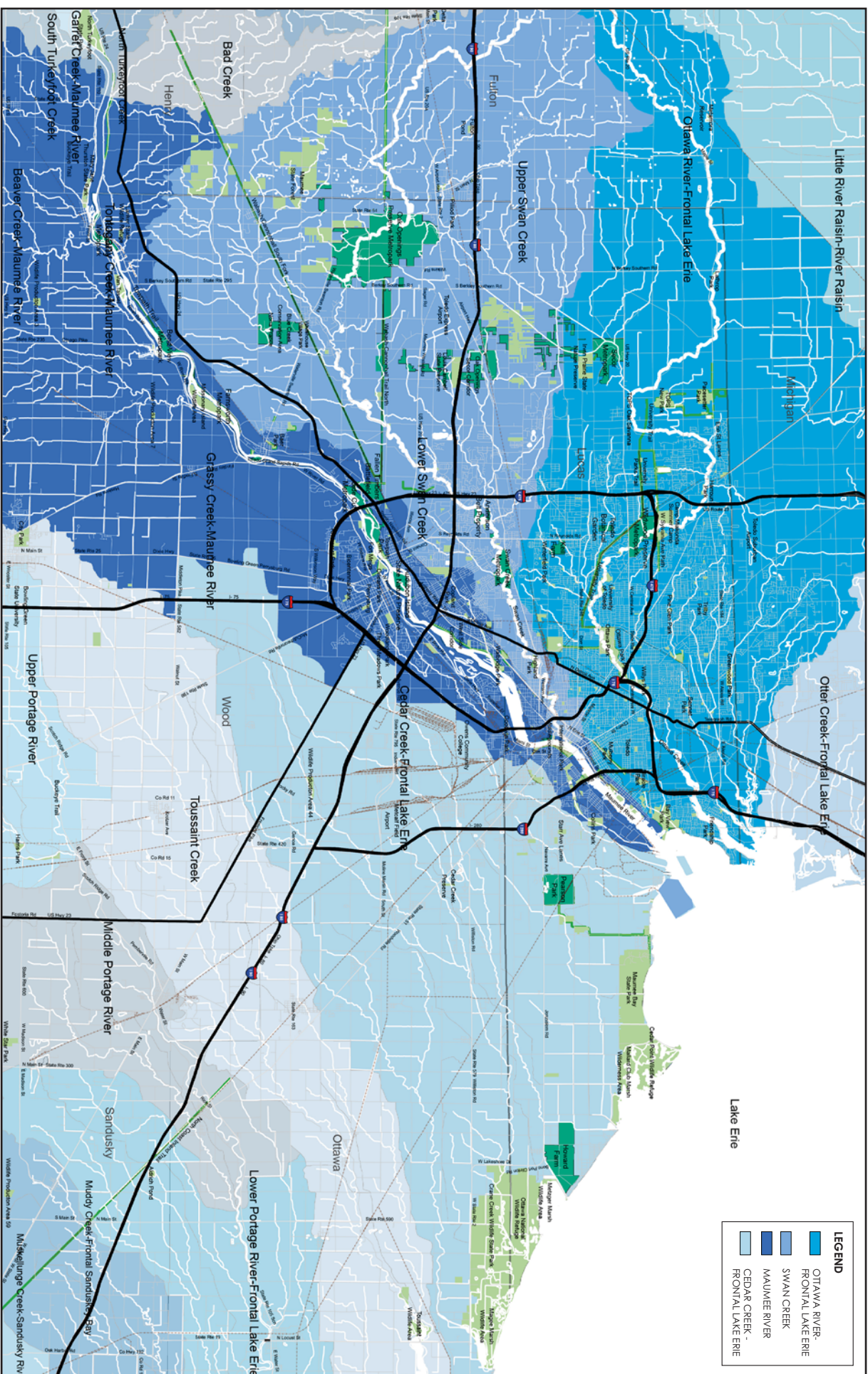


Figure 1-2. Emerging parks



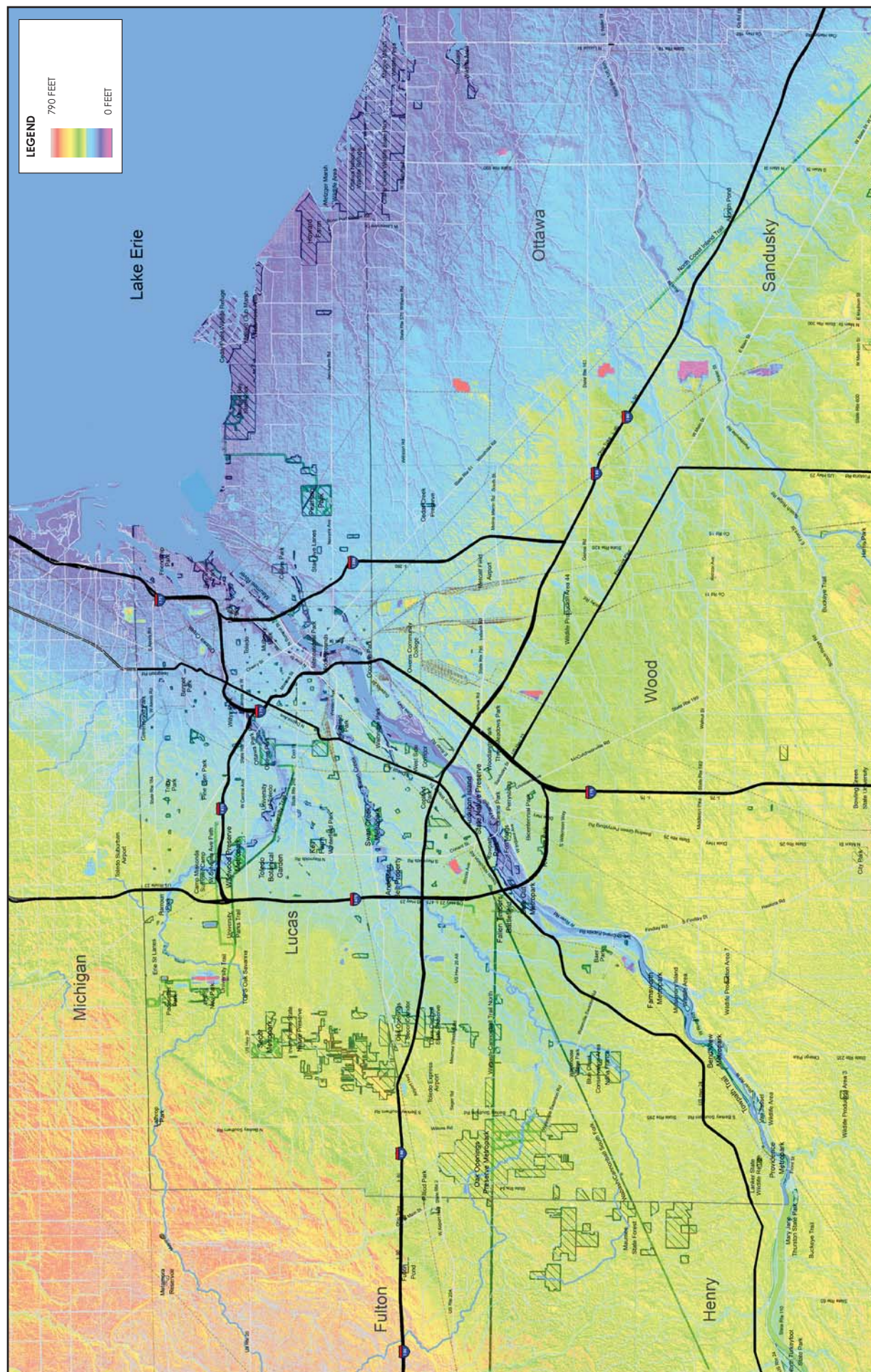


Figure 2-8. Topography of Toledo Area (Source: 2013 National Elevation Dataset Census Data: Census. Gov 2010 Census Data)

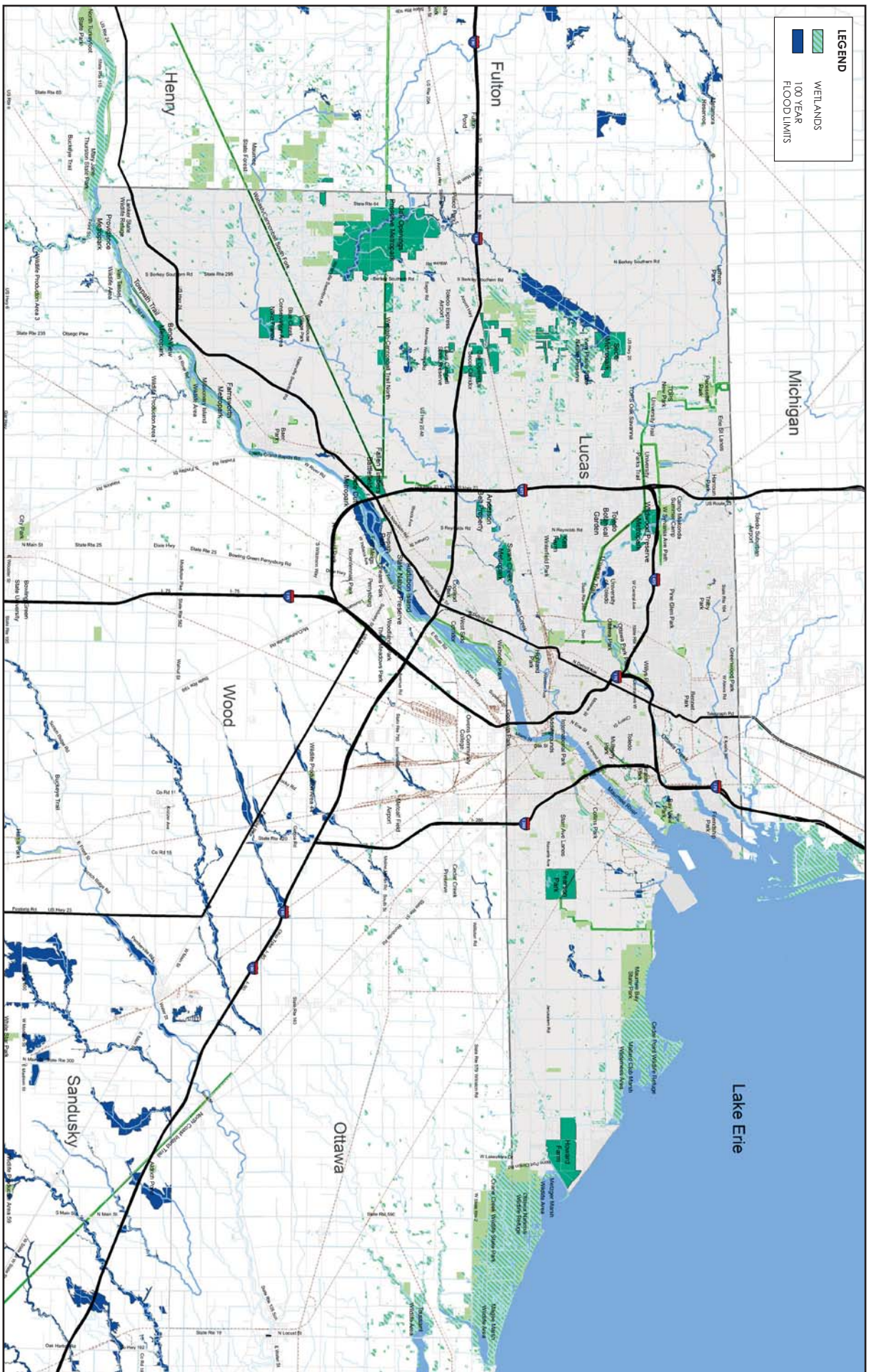


Figure 2-9. Regional wetlands and 100-year flood plain limits (Source: NWI and 2011 FEMA

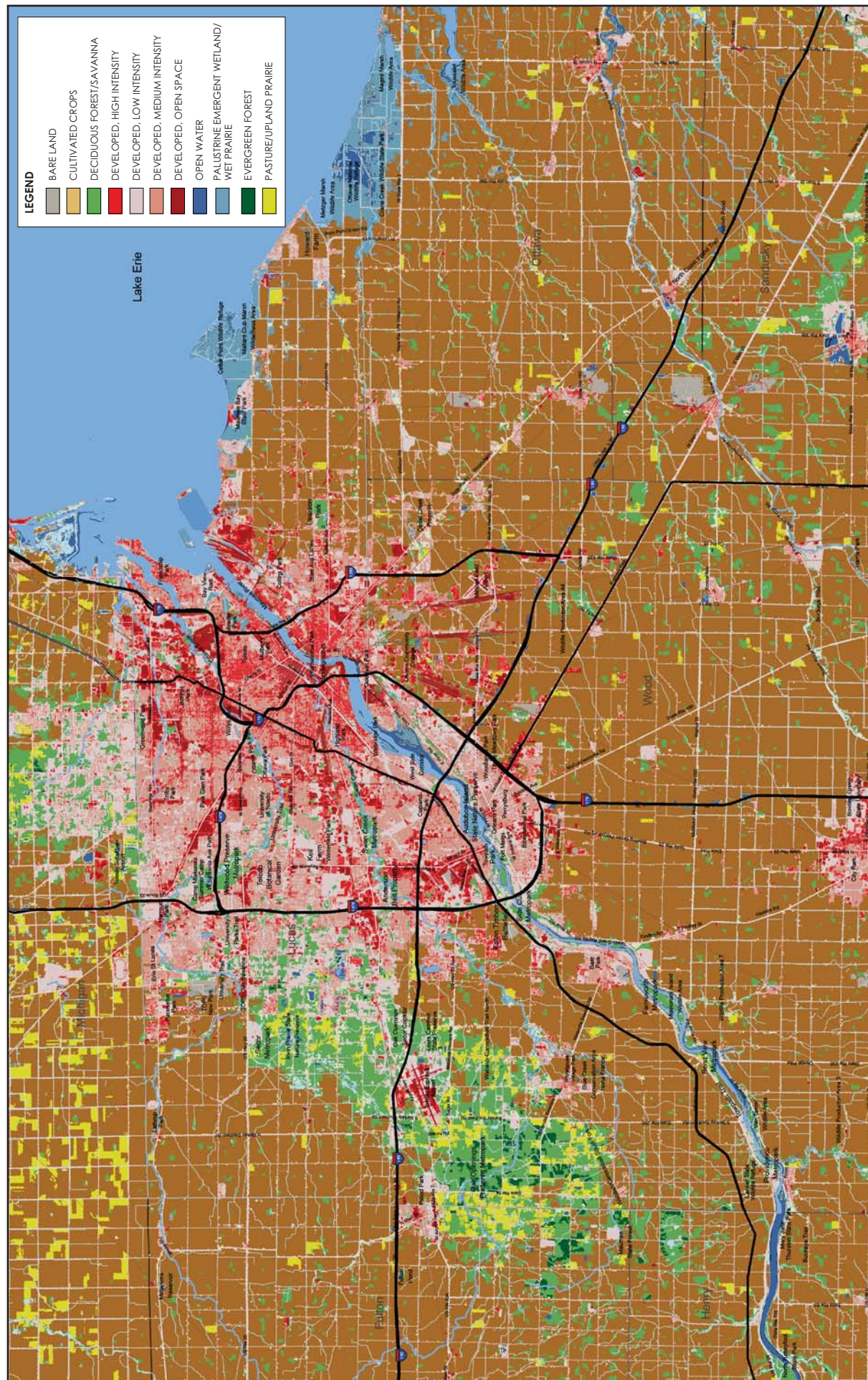


Figure 2-11. Land cover of the Toledo area (Source: 2010 National Landcover Data Set)

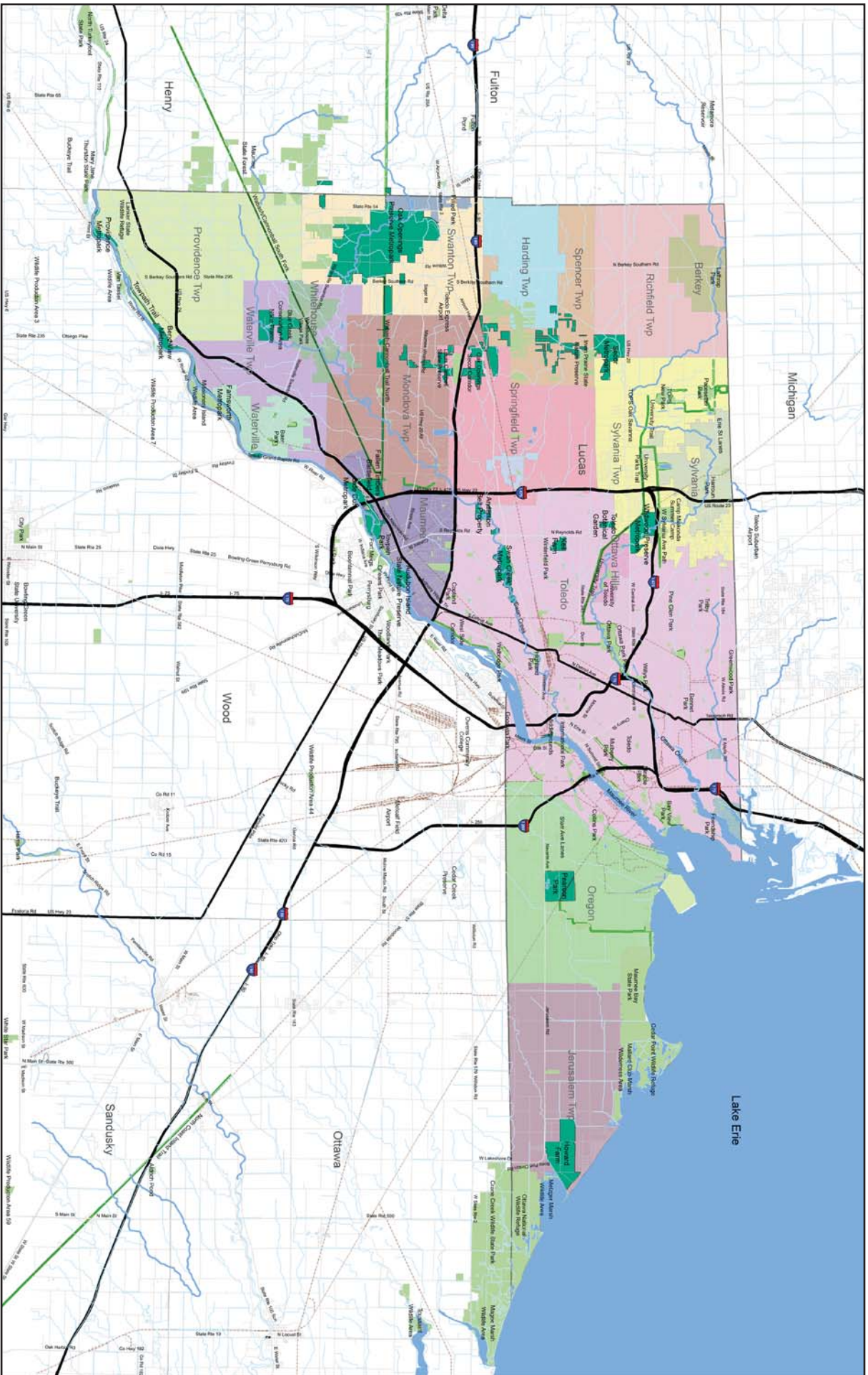


Figure 2-12: Municipalities and townships of Lucas County

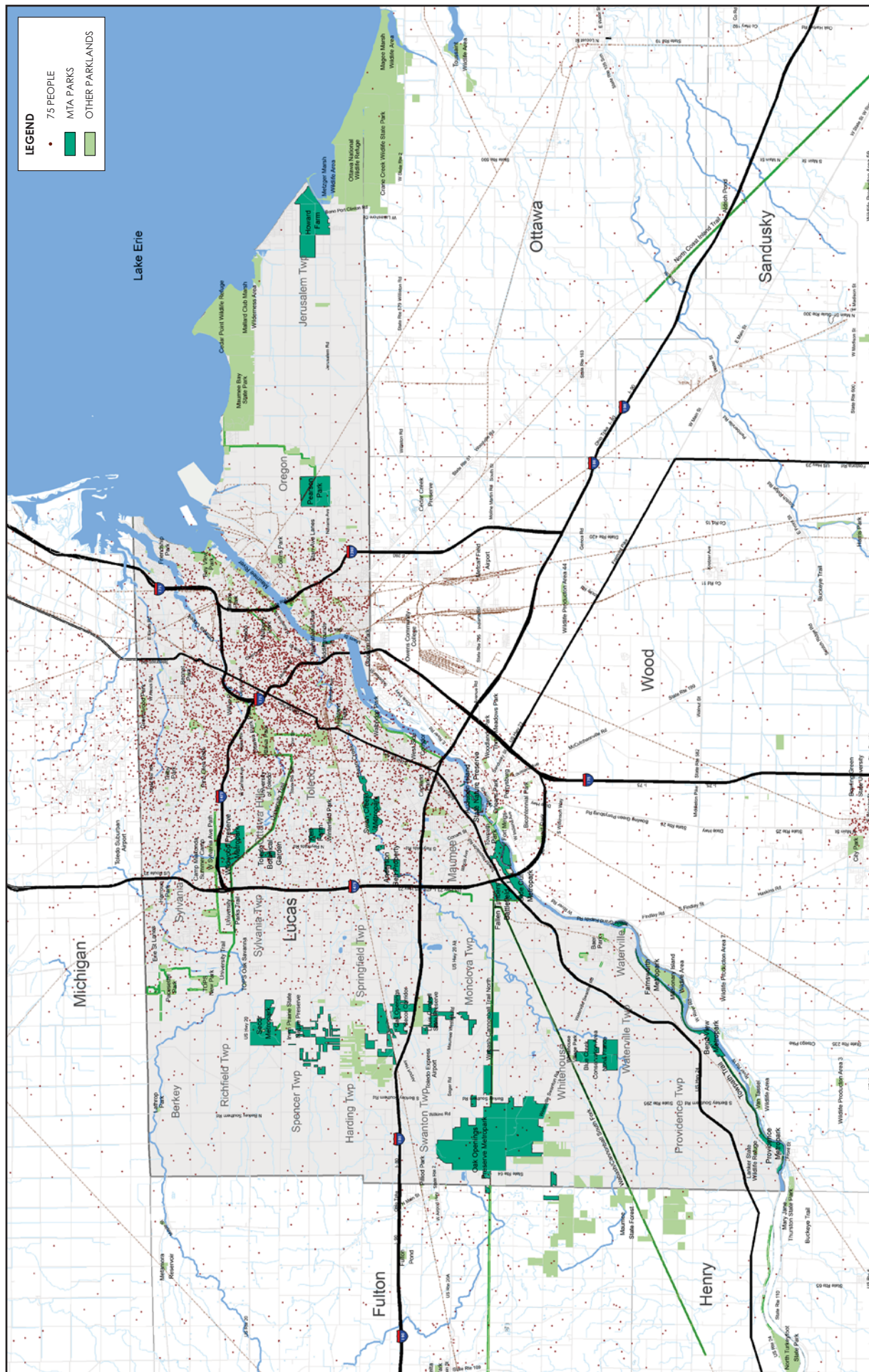
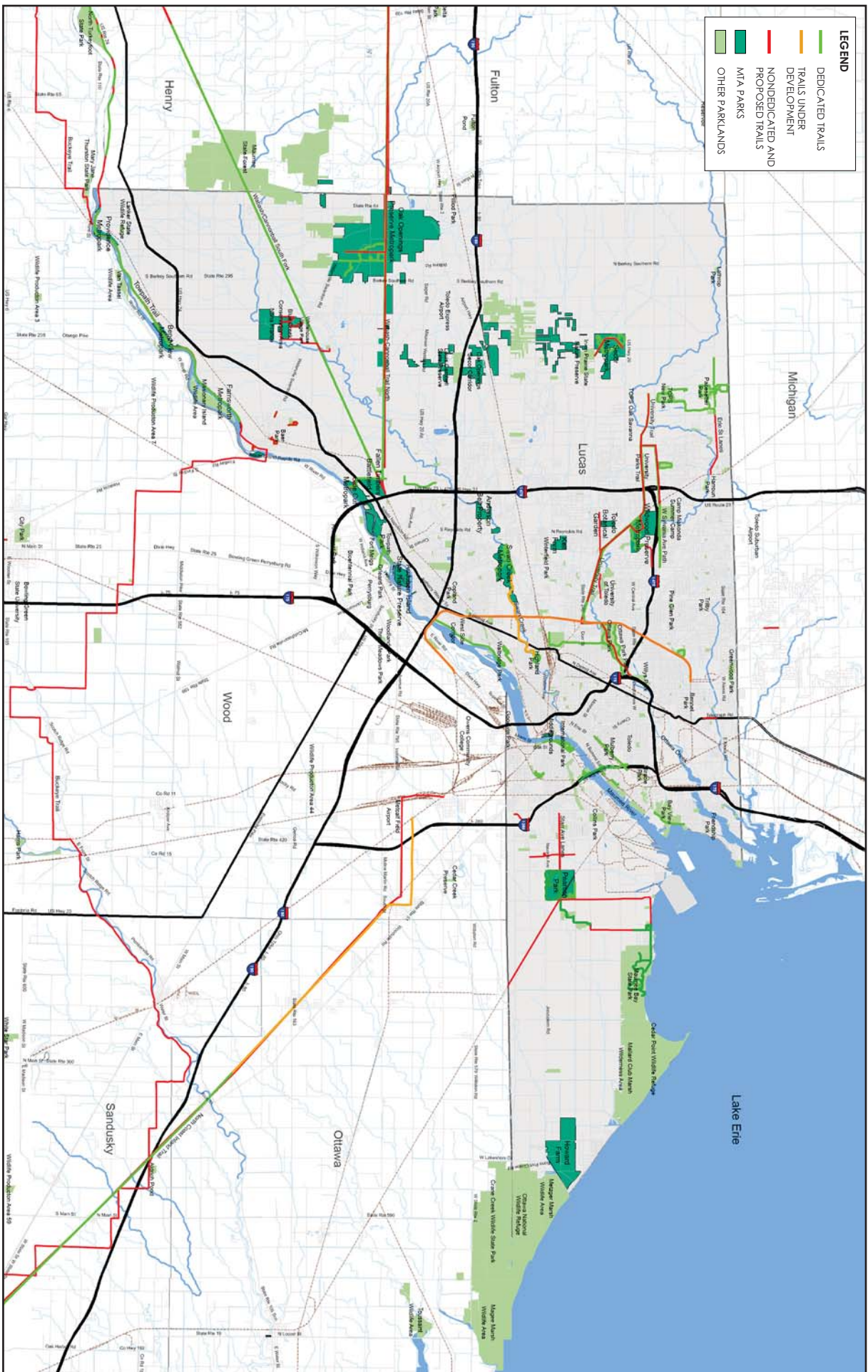


Figure 2-13. Population distribution of Lucas County (Source: U.S. Census Bureau)



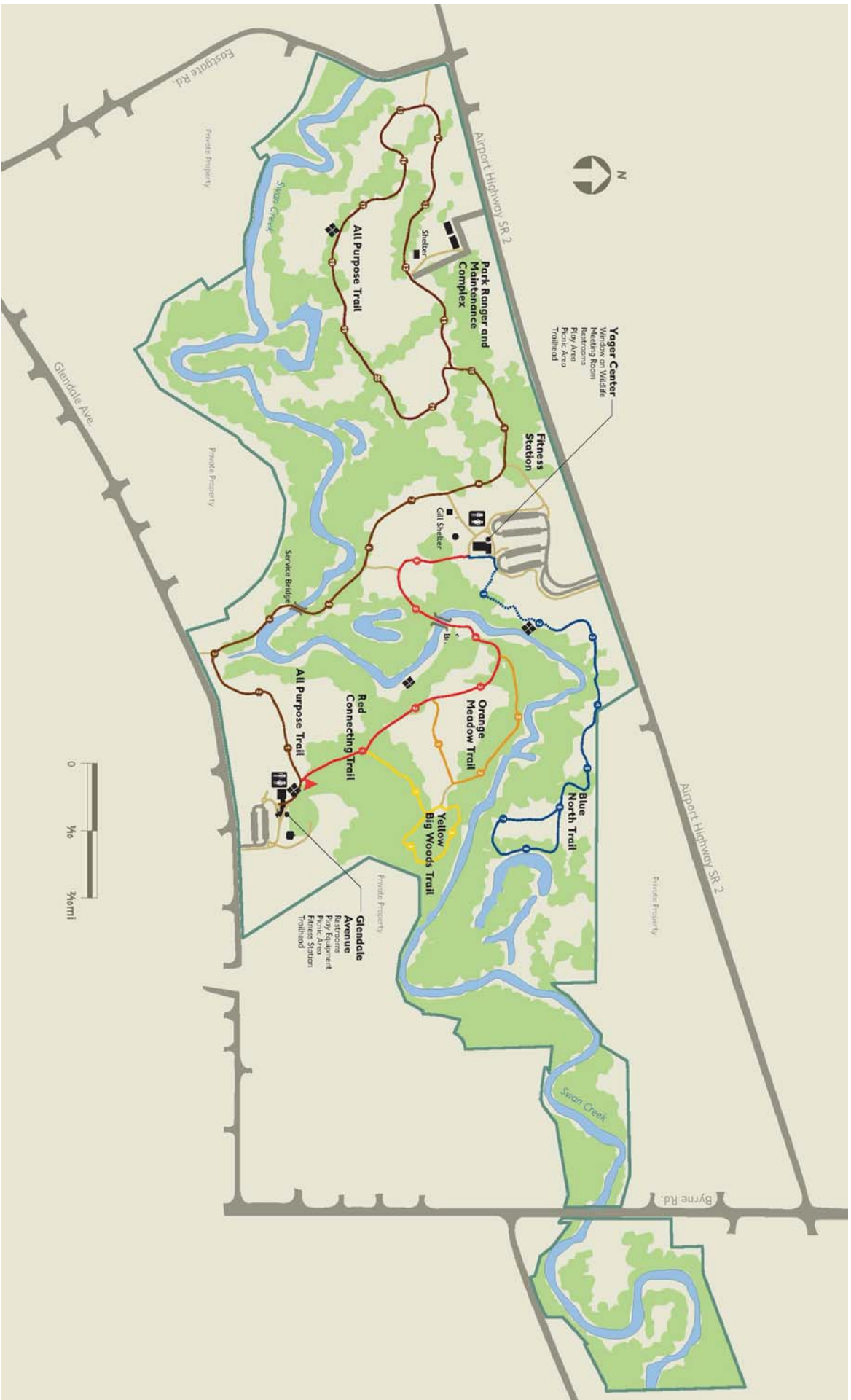
APPENDIX B – MAPS OF EXISTING AND EMERGING PARKS







Pearson map

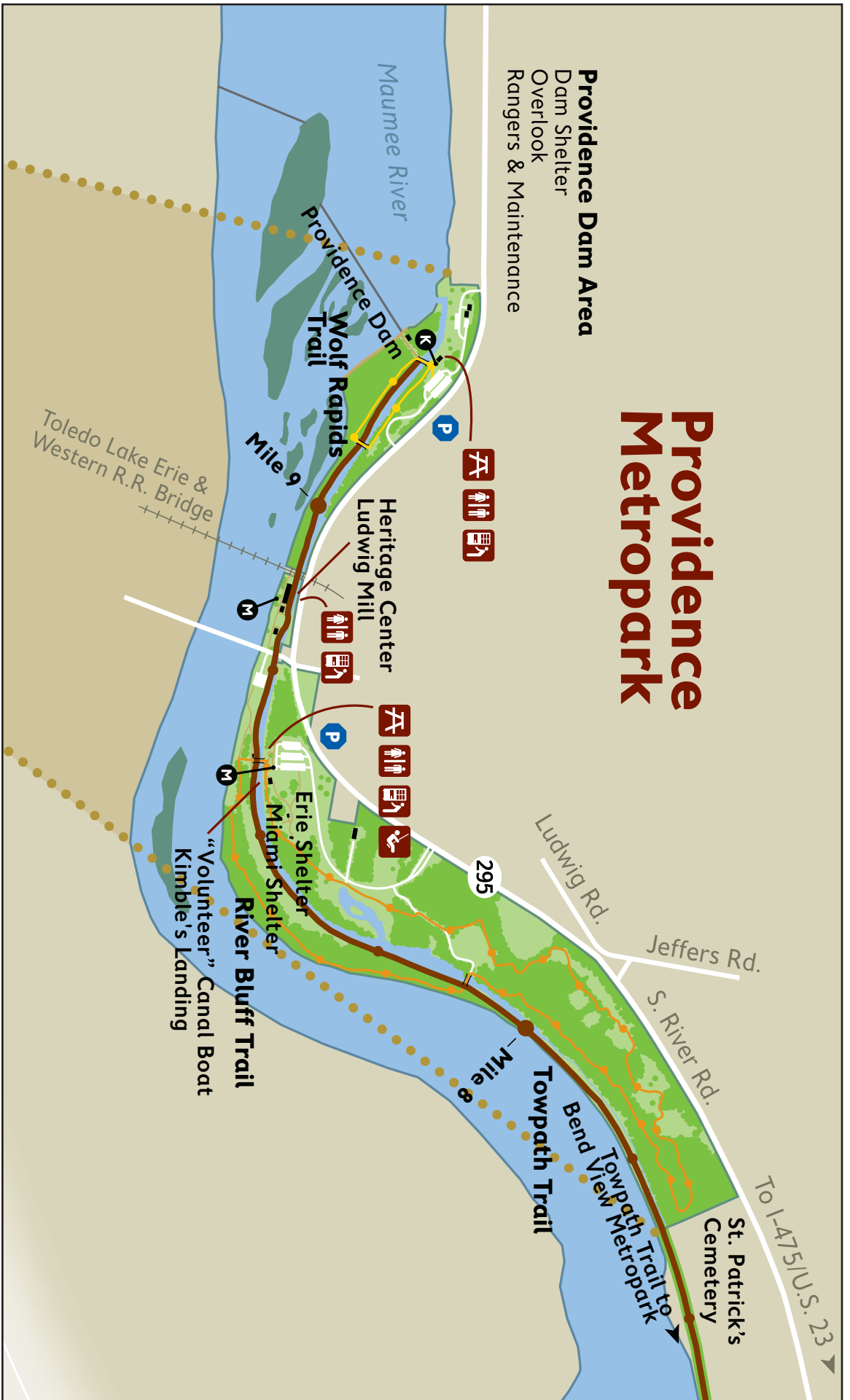


Swan Creek Preserve map



Providence Metropark

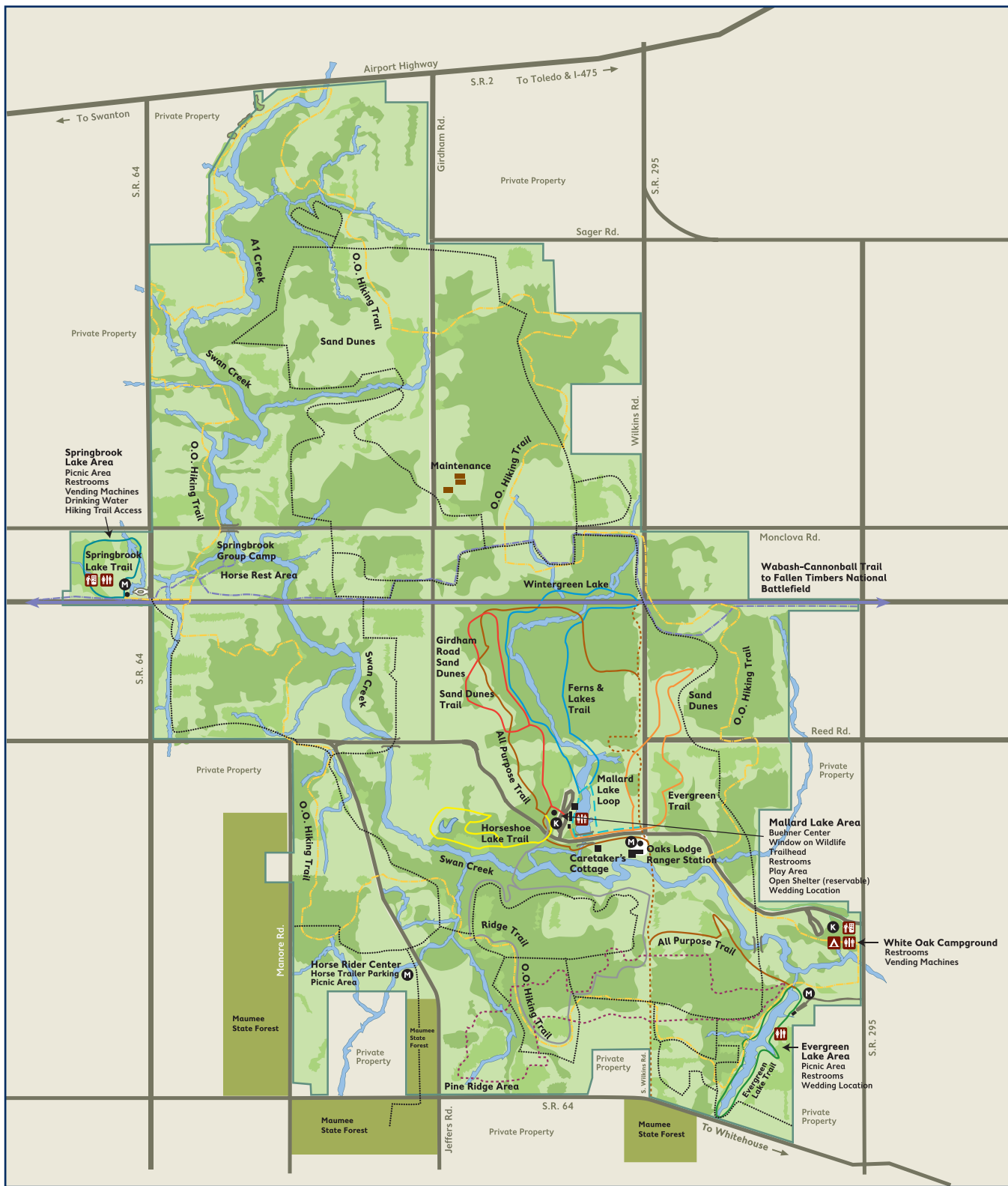
Providence Dam Area
 Dam Shelter
 Overlook
 Rangers & Maintenance



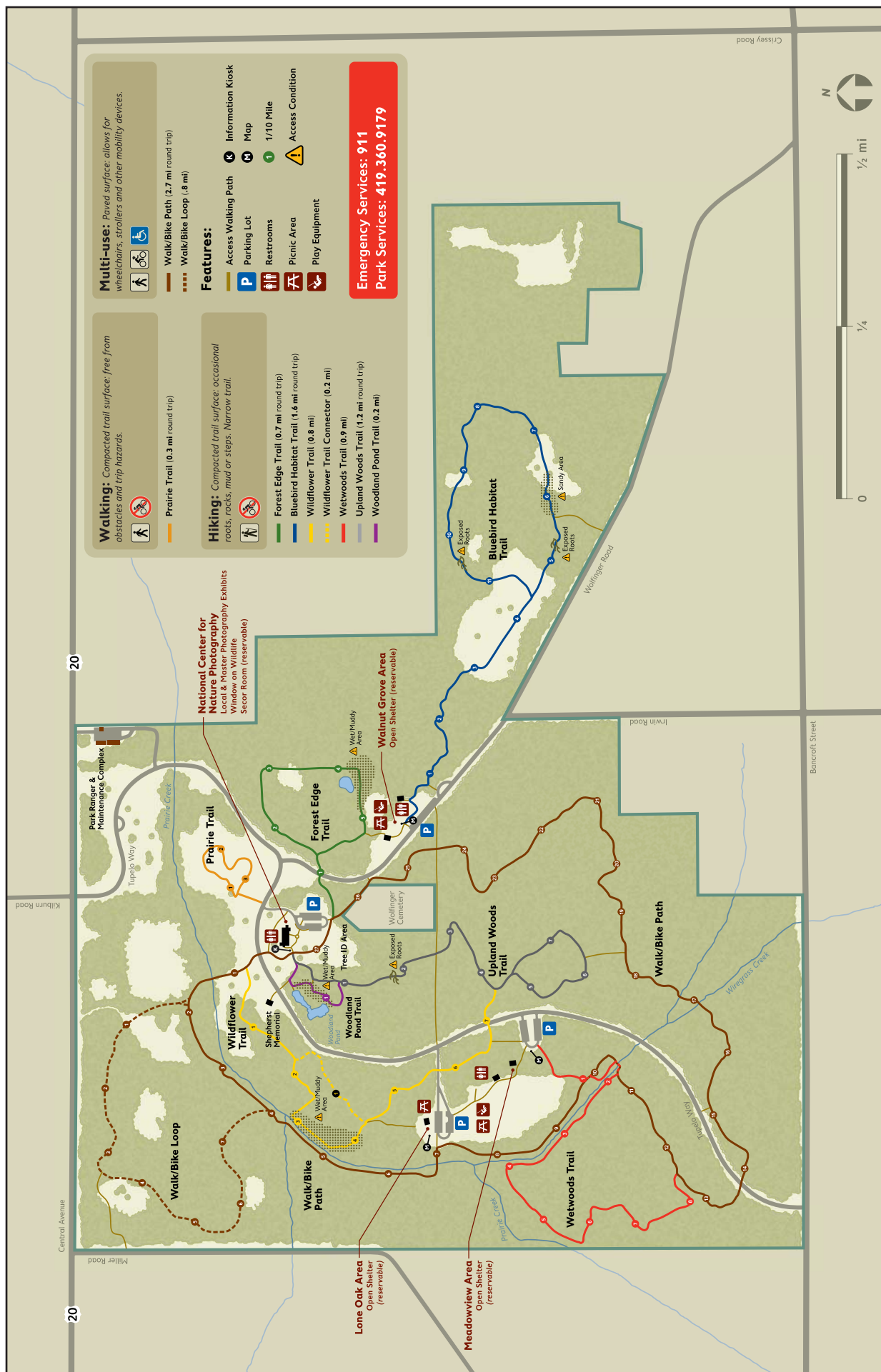
Providence map



Side Cut map

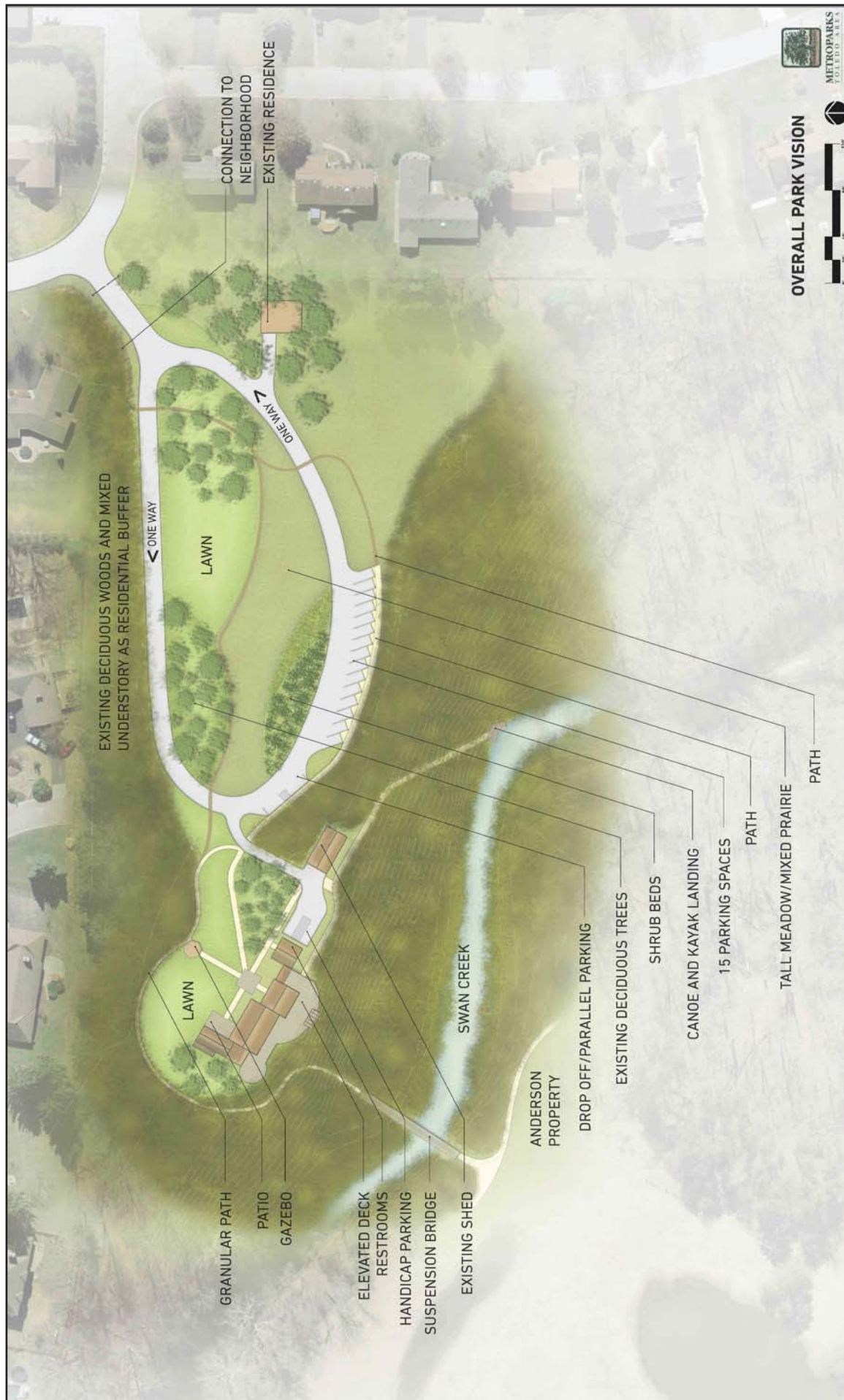


Oak Openings Preserve map

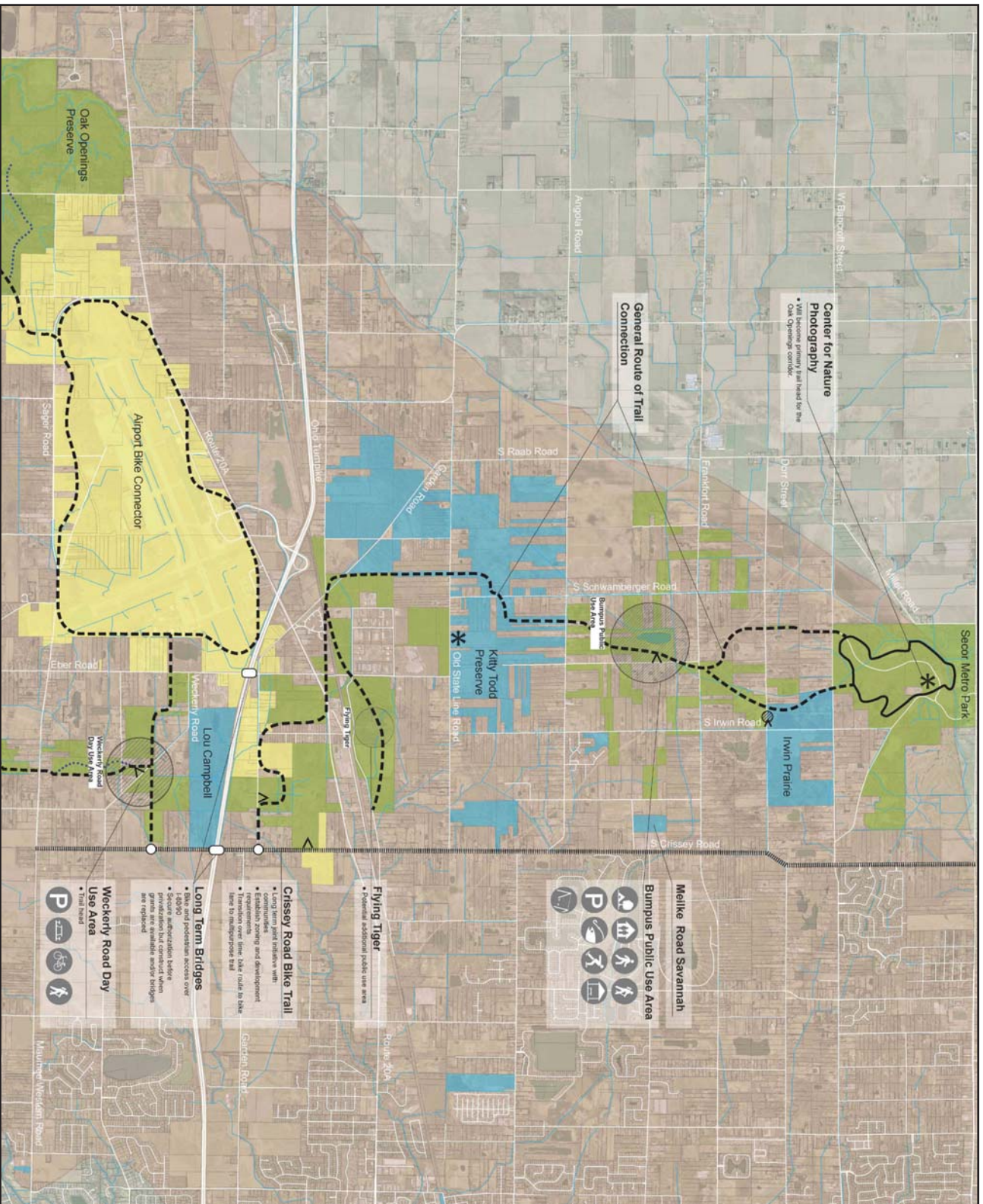




Keil Property map (Emerging Park)



Brookwood/Swan Creek Corridor map (Emerging Park)



Oak Openings Corridor map (Emerging Park)



Blue Creek Conservation Area map - North Zone (Emerging Park)



Blue Creek Conservation Area map – South Zone (Emerging Park)



Fallen Timbers Battlefield map (Emerging Park)



Fort Miamis map (Emerging Park)






















































MISSION STATEMENT

A site that once connected people and goods from the river to land will now connect people back to Toledo's waterfront. The restoration and management of natural areas at Middlegrounds will forge new recreational and interpretive connections between the community and its unique Maumee River heritage.

GOALS

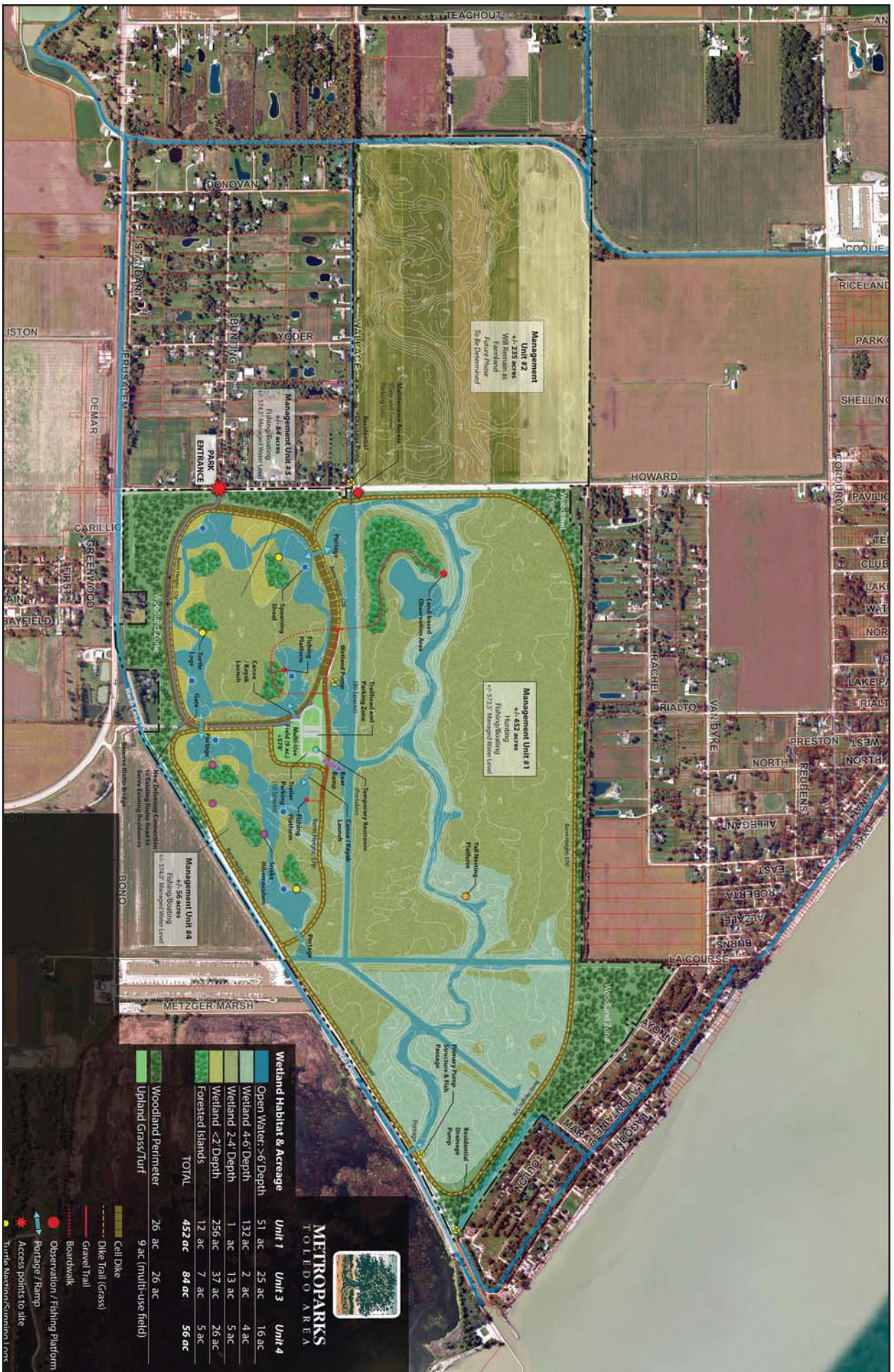
- Respond to the site's natural, historic, and cultural environment
- Increase park system access to urban residents
- Attract users beyond the city
- Encourage users of all ages/abilities
- Provide a balance between active and passive uses
- Encourage year-round use
- Create the opportunity for "green" design solutions
- Physically and visually connect to the community/city

SITE LEGEND

	Large / Canopy Tree		Turf Grass Lawn / Fescue Mow Edge
	Small / Ornamental Tree		Shrub / Groundcover Bed
	Existing Large Tree		Existing Woods
			Meiotic Prairie
			Wetland
			Concrete
			Asphalt
			Special Paving: Brick / Colored Concrete
			Special Paving: Cobble
			Elevated Walk / Decking
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			



Middlegrounds map (Emerging Park)



Howard Farms Property map (Emerging Park)